

State Collapse in Africa: The Case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Assignment presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (International studies) at the University of Stellenbosch



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December 2002

Declaration

I, the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

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Abstract

The African State is a product of colonialism. It did not emerge from the needs of African people; indeed, the very concept is foreign to traditional African notions of authority. When the colonial era came to a close, its institutions were turned over to local elites who were either too inexperienced or too out of touch with the people they supposedly represented to effectively govern and manage the newly independent states. The result was widespread and continual ethno-regional violence, coupled with the progressive disintegration of the state authority and civil society. When such conditions remain unchecked, they ultimately lead to what political analysts refer to as the collapse of the state.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), formerly Zaire, constitutes a recent example of this phenomenon. At present, approximately half of its territory is under foreign military occupation, with no fewer than six states involved, whether officially or unofficially: Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi intervening on the side of the rebels, and Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia supporting government forces (These states have since withdrawn their forces). To this number must be added a number of opposition groups from neighbouring states, including The Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), some elements from the all-Hutu militia wing of Burundi's *Conseil national pour la démocratie* (CND) and remnant Rwandan Hutu, the so-called *Interhamwe*, as well as Mai-Mai and FRF (*les Forces républicaines fédéralistes*, led by Muller Ruhim) factions who fight the presence of the Rwandan army in the DRC (neither of which could be described as pro-governmental).

The DRC is a failed state. All structures of legitimate power and authority have disintegrated; political order and the rule of law have been suspended. As a result, the state is rendered impotent: it cannot seek the welfare of its citizens, provide health care and education, dispense justice or maintain existing infrastructure. Civil society lacks the ability to fill the vacuum, and tribal and ethnic conflicts have steadily intensified.

The study analyses the reasons for state collapse in general and examines the immediate causes of the conflict in the DRC in particular, including the legacy of colonial rule, land shortages and ethnic rivalry. It attempts to show that the collapse of the state in the DRC resulted largely from the imposition of poorly adapted western-style political institutions on traditional African structures of authority. Against this background, the study shows that the poor performance of the Congolese government in terms of its ability to constitute a legitimate arena for political activity, to confer a national identity and to act as security guarantor for its population represent the broad causes of the failure of the DRC state.

State collapse is a long-term degenerative process, marked by the loss of control over political and economic space. As neighbouring states encroached on the failing DRC, its legitimacy was gravely undermined through the direct involvement of these states in its political processes. Moreover, these neighbouring countries harbour dissident movements who seek to influence DRC politics from within the safety of their borders.

The collapse of the DRC poses a grave threat to African, and indeed global, stability, compromising neighbouring states through the vast influx of refugees and stimulating the illegal arms trade. The extent of the crises compels the international community to intervene. The immediate priority should be the reconstruction of a legitimate state system within the limits of the present borders. This can only be made possible through the implementation of the Lusaka agreement, which offers the most hope for a solution through the restoration of legitimate government, the reassertion of Congolese sovereignty, the reconstruction of a disciplined and efficient military and the convocation of a body for inter-Congolese dialogue.

The DRC has been characterised by gross mismanagement ever since its independence in 1960; it is of the utmost urgency that the crisis not be allowed to escalate further. The DRC state needs total reconstruction: a process that will be extremely complex and time consuming, aimed at reviving institutional mechanisms that will return legitimate power to the state and re-establish social trust. In order to

achieve these goals, a forum of national reconciliation, where all the belligerents in the conflict must participate towards finding a solution, will have to be established. The first priority of such a body should be the creation of a strong democratic transitional government before any further reconstruction of the state can be attempted.

Opsomming

Die staat in Afrika is 'n produk van kolonialisme. Post-koloniale Afrikastate was nie die natuurlike uitvloeisels van die behoeftes van Afrikane nie; inderdaad, selfs die konsep van 'n nasiestaat was vreemd binne die konteks van tradisionele, inheemse gesagstrukture. Die plaaslike elites, in wie se hande die koloniale instellings, en daarmee saam die staatsgesag, oorgegee is met die beëindiging van koloniale beheer, het nie oor die vaardighede beskik om effektiewe regering en beheer oor die nuut-onafhanklike state uit te oefen nie; hulle was meestal onervare of uit voeling met die bevolkings oor wie hulle regeer het. Die gevolg was wydverspreide en voortslepende etniese en regionale geweld en die geleidelike verbrokkeling van staatsgesag en die burgerlike gemeenskap. Wanneer sulke omstandighede toegelaat word om hul loop te neem, lei dit onvermydelik tot die uiteindelijke totale verbrokkeling van die staat.

Die Demokratiese Republiek van die Kongo (DRK) - die voormalige Zaïre – is 'n voorbeeld van hierdie verskynsel. Nagenoeg die helfte van die oppervlakte van dié land is tans onder offisiële of nie-offisiële buitelandse militêre besetting, met nie minder nie as ses state wat betrek is by die konflik: Rwanda, Oeganda en Burundi ondersteun die rebelle; Angola, Zimbabwe en Namibië (hierdie state het sedertdien hul magte ontrek) veg aan die kant van regeringsmagte. Afgesien van hierdie magte, is daar ook verskeie opposisiegroepe wat vanuit buurstate optree, insluitende UNITA-vegters uit Angola, elemente van die uitsluitlik Hutu militêre vleuel van die Burundese *Conseil national pour la démocratie* (CND) en oorblyfsels van die Rwandese Hutus (die sogenaamde *Interhamwe*), asook Mai-Mai en FRF (*les Forces républicaines fédéralistes*, onder die aanvoering van Muller Ruhim) faksies. Laasgenoemde twee groepe veg teen die teenwoordigheid van die Rwandese weermag in die DRK; nie een van die twee kan as pro-regering beskryf word nie.

Die DRK is 'n mislukte staat. Alle legitieme mag- en gesagstrukture het verbrokkel; politieke beheer en wetstoepassing is opgehef. Die gevolg is dat die staat onmagtig is om die welvaart van sy burgers te bevorder, gesondheidsdienste en

opvoeding te verskaf, regspleging uit te voer of bestaande infrastruktuur in stand te hou. Die burgerlike gemeenskap beskik nie oor die vaardighede om in die gaping te tree nie, en stam- en etniese konflik neem steeds toe.

Hierdie studie ondersoek die algemene redes vir staatsverval en die spesifieke oorsake van die krisis in die DRK, waaronder die koloniale invloed, grondkewessies en etniese konflik. Daar word gepoog om aan te toon dat die staatsverval binne die DRK grotendeels toe te skryf is aan die afdwing van ontoepaslike, Westerse politiese instellings op tradisionele, inheemse gesagstrukture. In die lig hiervan word daar verder aangevoer dat die swak vertoning van die Kongolese regering - die onvermoë om as legitieme politieke arena te dien, 'n nasionale identiteit aan staatsburgers te verleen en hulle veiligheid te verseker - die basiese oorsaak is van die mislukking van die staat in die DRK.

Staatsverval is 'n geleidelike proses; 'n stelselmatige en langdurende aftakeling, gekenmerk deur die verlies aan beheer oor die politieke en ekonomiese sfere. Namate buurstate toenemend betrokke geraak het in die probleemgeteisterde DRK, is staatslegitimiteit verder ondermyn deur die direkte politieke inmenging van hierdie buurlande. Daarby huisves hierdie lande ook afvallige groepe wat poog om politieke invloed op die DRK van buite die landsgrense uit te oefen..

Die verbokkeling van die staat binne die DRK is 'n wesenlike bedreiging vir stabiliteit binne Afrika, maar ook op 'n internasionale skaal. Sy buurstate word bedreig deur grootskaalse vlugtelingbewegings en die voorslepende konflik stimuleer onwettige internasionale wapenhandel. Die omvang van die krisis noop die internasionale gemeenskap om in te gryp. Die onmiddellike prioriteit van sodanige ingryping behoort die rekonstruksie van 'n legitieme staatstelsel binne die bestaande landsgrense te wees; dit kan slegs bewerkstellig word deur die implementering van die Lusaka ooreenkoms. Hierdie ooreenkoms bied die meeste hoop vir 'n oplossing tot die krisis deur die daarstelling van 'n legitieme regering, die herbevestiging van Kongolese soewereiniteit, die rekonstruksie van 'n gedissiplineerde en effektiewe militêre mag en die skep van 'n nasionale versoeningsliggaam.

Sedert sy onafhanklikwording in 1960, is die DRC gekenmerk deur ernstige wanadministrasie. Dit is van uiterste belang dat hierdie situasie nie toegelaat word om voort te duur en te vererger nie. Algehele rekonstruksie is nodig – ‘n uiters komplekse en tydsame proses met die uiteindelijke oogmerk om daardie institusionele meganismes wat ‘n terugkeer tot legitieme mag en gesag en ‘n herbevestiging van burgerlike vertroue tot gevolg sal hê, te laat herleef. Ten einde hierdie doel te bereik, sal ‘n nasionale versoeningsliggaam geskep moet word. Alle partye in die konflik behoort betrek te word in ‘n poging om ‘n oplossing te vind. Hierdie liggaam sal ‘n sterk, verteenwoordigende oorgangsregering daar moet stel voordat enige verdere vordering met die rekonstruksie van die staat sal kan plaasvind.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank God through whom all is possible for his excellent guidance and support.

Foremost thanks to my parents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews and friends who made this study possible through their encouragement, support and contributions.

I am much indebted to my supervisor, Mr Anthony Leysens for his painstaking but gentle coaching, and supervision throughout this study. Thank you very much for initiating and focusing my study on the collapse of the state in the DRC Congo. I would like also to thank Mrs Tania Botha for her valuable input and assistance regarding the proofreading and structure of this study. In the same breath, thank you very much to Prof Philip Nel who accepted me to be in the programme of International studies. Thank you, also to all the professors of the Department of Political science for being always available and supportive.

In addition, my innermost gratitude goes to the Institute for Catholic Education, the South African National Zakha Fund and Madam Anna Hansler, without whose financial support my studies would not have been possible. My profound gratitude to the wonderful people of the Cape Town Refugee Center whose generous advice made my dream comes true.

To Esther Kaleji, Janchito Neto, Lungile Thawe, Fernand Kamba, Zoe Nkogolo, Richard Lipambu and all my classmates, I say thank you for having given me the wings to fly. Your love, patience and encouragement made this possible.

I dedicate these two years of study to all of you

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Any assessment of the current position of many African states reveals that the continent is in the grip of a crisis of immense proportions. The situation can be ascribed to poor governance on a grand scale, characterized by massive embezzlement of state funds and misappropriation of assets by high office holders and wide-spread corruption among civil servants, fiscal incompetence and the inability or unwillingness of state institutions to stimulate economic growth, steady economic decline and the disintegration of social services and the failure of states to exercise meaningful control over their territories. As this paper will show, these factors constitute a total collapse of the state.

The realist perspective argues that the authority of the state depends on its ability to exercise a monopoly over the use of legitimate force within its territory. Political power depends ultimately on the capacity to wield the means of coercion. One can agree that power depends on coercion as well as on consensus and legitimacy. Authority must have a consensus those are governed or at least some of them to assume power. Thus the authority has the ability to make other conform to one's set of rules. Migdal (1988:18) believes that leaders hold a monopoly over the principal means of coercion in their society in way to maintain a firm control over standing armies and police forces, while they eliminating non-state controlled armies, militias and gangs. State is an organisation, composed of numerous agencies led and coordinated by state's leadership (executive authority) that has the ability or authority to make and implement the binding rules for all the people as well as the parameters of rule making for others social organisations in given territory, using force if necessary to have its way.

In some cases, for instance international institutions have assumed important functions previously performed by states. Powerful international institutions, bureaucracies, as well as multinational corporations have challenged the autonomy of the state. Huntington (1997:35) believes the state has, to a large extent, lost the ability to control the flows of idea, technology, goods and people. So, it should be said that while states remain the primary actors in world affairs, they are also experiencing a loss of sovereignty, functions and power.

Evans (1997:63) agrees that in some part of the developing world most dramatically in Africa, real eclipse of the state, in the sense of full-blown institutional collapse, took place. Governments simply do not govern or they have been unable to achieve that which had been so widely assumed inevitably. There is a situation where planners begin by attempting to transform their environment and end by being absorbed into it. This failure is common in the developing countries of the world where glittering promise has been replaced by discouraging performance. He argues that even where there was no threat of collapse, worrisome erosion of public institutional capacity seemed to be underway.

The contemporary literature on the crisis in the Congo DRC focuses on the different basic issues. Most of this literature seeks to point out the quest for economic and social development. The contemporary literature on the crisis in the Congo focuses on the prospects for peace in the DRC Congo. Most analysts emphasise the need for economic and social development. As suggested by Wolpe (2000: 27) the most widespread interstate war in modern African history has significant consequences not only for 50 million Congolese, but also for the people of all nine countries on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) borders and beyond. Not many systematic studies have been conducted to explain the reasons related to the collapse of the state in the DRC Congo.

Moreover, little effort has been made to reflect on the manner in which the Belgian colonial heritage has contributed to this state of affairs. As a result, current strategies to resolve the Congolese crisis are best understood within a broader conceptual framework, one that analytically distinguishes between the closely linked concepts of “political crisis” and “state crisis”. This study is aimed at giving a more qualitative, understanding of the dynamics of state planning and policy reforms in the DRC.

In the absence of political control and other mechanisms of accountability, state officials behave very much as they please. Robert and Jennifer (1986: 25) believe that the Belgian colonial state was relatively better organised than its successor to perform its specific administration duties. Vital statistics, census figures, economic data and other records were carefully prepared and generally well kept. Thus, we believe that in spite of its lack of legitimacy as an alien and oppressive structure of economic exploitation, political repression, and cultural oppression, the colonial state attained a high level of administrative performance and succeeded in establishing a stable, though unequal social order in which ordinary Africans enjoyed a limited but regular delivery of social services.

A major determinant of the nature of the state is the fact that the state must facilitate the creation of wealth and have a capacity to defend it, domestically as well as internationally (Clapham Cited by Nzongola 1987: 16). This requires the expansion of the role of the state in civil society, the maintenance of law and order, political control and revenue collection. The personal enrichment of state officials has negative consequences for both development and democracy. The mismanagement, corruption, capital flight and other ills have reduced the state’s ability to maintain the social infrastructure inherited from the colonial past. As Evans (in Nettle 1997: 79) argues, the revitalisation of civil society is portrayed, at least by the conservatives, as a solution to the social and political side of public wellbeing.

Finally, the Congo DRC crisis can also be understood within a larger perspective as part of the general crisis of world capitalism. In this context, Nzongola (1999:73) believes that the crisis is related to the historical tasks of neo-colonialism, whose basic aim is the preservation of a country's position in the international division of labour as a source of raw materials and cheap labour. However Newton (1989:212) believes that the collapse of the copper price in the Congo DRC in 1975 showed that the honeymoon was over, the country was bankrupt, and neo-colonialism became the order of the day. New York banks and IMF dictated economic policies, which involved devaluation, import controls, wage restrictions, reductions in payrolls. By the early 1980s, debt repayment was eating up 60% of export earnings; copper, cobalt and diamond prices were lower than ever. From 1965 to 1984, the average annual growth rate per capita was minus 1,6%.

Breytenbach (2000:1) believes that with the end of the cold war in 1989 there was an expectation that the end of East-West rivalries, redemocratisation of many African states and introduction of economic structure adjustment policies would save to make the post 1989 conditions on the continent more consequential, not a cause of the conflict concerns. However, paraphrasing Cornwell, Breytenbach (2000:1) argues that by the year 2000 Africa's stability was seriously compromised, as there were more conflicts than in 1989 when the cold war came to end. The end of the cold war did not therefore enhance conflict risk reduction.

1.2 Purpose of the study

Broadly, the aim of the present study is to examine the reasons for the failure of the state in Africa, with special emphasis on the collapse of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This study will provide new understanding of the causes of crisis and breakdown in the DRC and the processes of avoiding or overcoming it. At present, the DRC is in a state of armed conflict, with armed bands backed by Rwanda and Uganda controlling vast areas of its territory. The rebels' establishment of an

order entirely of their own confirms the thesis of the African state as being weak and ineffectual.

During the course of the present study, I will define the concept of state and examine its legacy in the African context. I will attempt to show that the notion of statehood is inherently alien to Africa and that, ever since the importation of this essentially Western concept to the African continent, the state has been viewed as a replicate or imposed political system. The Euro-centric conception of nation state, as instituted at the end of the colonial era, failed to take hold in Africa. It proved fragile and weak, and thus unequal to the task of general governance and resolving the concrete problems of each particular country. This resulted in a situation of perennial crises, instability and armed conflict, with ethnicity often touted as a major contributory factor behind many conflicts.

According to Lemarchand (2001:7) the decay of the state is not a sudden event. Instead, it is a gradual process culminating in total failure. In the case of the DRC Congo, a range of factors contributed to the final collapse: some are specific to the history of the country and its socio-ethnic configurations, others emanate from a complex pattern of interaction dictated by the kin-country syndrome.

1.3 The main questions and subquestions

The following questions and subquestions will guide the study: what are the immediate causes of the current conflict in the DRC? Is the war situation caused by economic or ethnic reason? What, then accounts for the failure of the state in the DRC? Broadly, the study seeks to examine the collapse of the state in Congo DRC as well as its implications to the conflict.

1.4 Definitions

One could assert that when Africanists speak of the collapse of the state, they are speaking of the collapse of civil structures, not that of ethnic ties which have been so supportive economically in the absence of the state. Migdal (1988:7) agrees that while strong states are those with high capabilities to penetrate society, including the capacities to regulate social relationships and extract resources, weak states are utterly incapable of sustaining itself as a member of the international community.

However, Zartman (1998:5) argues that collapse means that the basic functions of the state are no longer performed, the state is paralysed and inoperative: laws are not made, order is not preserved, and societal cohesion is not enhanced. As the authoritative political institution, the state has lost its legitimacy, which is therefore up for grabs, and so has lost its right to command and conduct public affairs. Zartman concludes that state collapse is the breakdown of good governance, law, and order.

Lemarchand (2001:8) agrees that state failure is one thing and states collapse something else. He believes that state failure and state collapse may have related origins, but they are not the same. Not all failed states in Africa collapse. Nor do all collapsed states end up split into warring fiefdoms. Indices of failure may range from declining institutional capacities, loss of legitimacy, increasing levels of corruption in high places, sporadic civil violence and so forth. While collapse points to utter disintegration of state institutions, the passage from failure to collapse is the implosion of the armed forces and the spread of civil violence on a large scale.

Thus, the syndrome of state collapse often begins when a regime loses its ability to satisfy various demand-bearing groups in society as resources dry up. Dissatisfaction and opposition grow; resulting in the regime's increased use of security forces to maintain order. Sometimes the old government falls, and a

successor regime, often based on military, is capable of arresting the deterioration. In the case of state collapse however, the degeneration is too widespread, and society is not able to rebound into a coherent foundation for the state. As a result the state collapses, political and economic space retract, the center no longer has authority, and power withers away.

1.5 Delimitation and limitations

Due to time constraints, spatially my study will be limited to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. But the study will also include a historical overview of the Great Lakes region and the colonisation phase. The study covers the period from 30 June 1960 (date independence) to July 1999 (date of the implementation of the Lusaka accords).

1.6 Methodology

This study predominantly used the qualitative approach and participant observation, triangulated by analysis of secondary sources. The decision to utilise qualitative techniques was based on the research aim. The thesis is additionally, also based on a number of relevant primary documents such as United Nations reports and annual government commission reports. As Miles & Huberman (1994:1) agree qualitative methods are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local context. I describe the chronological flow of events in the DRC Congo and identify those events, which led to the collapse of the state.

1.7 Research Design

Mason (1996: 9) agrees that the purpose of a research design is to gain or retain funding, support or access, to convince others of the value or intellectual credibility of the research, to demonstrate some form of external accountability, or simply to describe the scope and purpose of the research to those involved. Linked to the explanatory and descriptive nature of this study the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be used as a contextual example to determine the implication of the conflict in Africa, and the consequences of the state collapse.

1.8 Structure of the study

The argument of this study, concerning the collapse of the state in the DRC Congo, is developed through individual chapters. Chapter 1 “Introduction” attempts to outline and clarify the basic problem that underlies this study. Chapter 2 defines the concept of the state and examined its legacy in the African context. Chapter 3 reviews the notion of statehood in Africa. Chapter 4 focuses on the cycle of the crises in the DRC Congo. Chapter 5 explores the collapse of the state in the DRC and through these develops an understanding of what paths to the reconstruction of the state in the Congo. Chapter 6 concludes the study by drawing together the individual arguments made throughout the chapters and relating these to broader discussion on the nature of the DRC Congo transformation and the future of the state.

Chapter 2

The concept of the state

2.1 The definition of statehood

Although contemporary definitions of state systems vary considerably, the state can be defined in broad terms as a territorially bounded polity with a centralized government holding a monopoly of legitimate force. The notion of statehood presupposes the existence of territorial frontiers, a central government and a population.

Nortridge's definition of the state includes the following attributes: the existence of a well-defined territorial entity, centralised authority and control over the means of force and an effective administrative apparatus through which political, social and economic control can be exercised over the population (1976: 145). He stresses the importance of the population sharing a common historical experience and a general acceptance of the legitimacy and authority of the state. Samina (2001: 2) places further emphasis on the nature of the population. She points out that state boundaries will usually encompass different social classes and ethnic or cultural groups.

In mentioning that the emergence of the Euro-centric notion of the nation-state in the seventeenth century was the result of a set of particular social, political and economic experiences, Nortridge anticipates the possible problems with instituting this political construct in an environment that does not share the same set of experiences (1976: 145). However, Geldenhuys (2001: 2) maintains that the state remains the most appropriate form of political organization to meet the needs of the citizens it is supposed to serve, while admitting that the end of the Cold War exposed the state to the powerful – and possibly threatening - new forces of globalisation at one level, and fragmentation at another.

2.2 The origins of the modern state

According to Migdal (1988: 21), the modern concept of the state entered onto the historical stage in North-Western Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Geldenhuys (2001: 2) describes its emergence as a gradual development following the peace of Westphalia, about 350 years ago. Irrespective of the exact moment of their inception, it is worth mentioning, in the context of the present paper that the first Western European states were basically monarchical.

It is generally agreed that the first state era began with the Roman Empire and ended with the demise of the medieval European monarchies. Livingston (2000: 7) refers to post-revolutionary France as the first truly modern unitary state; prior to its establishment, Europe consisted of an order of federative polities. He asserts that during the 17th century - the time of William the Conqueror - there were thousands such independent political units, several hundred of which endured into the eighteenth century. The one common feature of all these various units - principalities, dukedoms, bishoprics, Papal States, small republics, city-states, margraves and free cities – was the central government of highly federated polities. Thus, even at its beginnings, the modern state still co-existed with a number of similar political entities, and together they eventually came to constitute a new system of state.

In a book review (2001: 29), Habib argues that the territorial state was not an inevitable development, but rather the product of contingent historical circumstances that became institutionalised at a particular time and in a particular place. He agrees that the ideology of the modern state can be traced to the seventeenth century and that it found its first concrete expression in post-revolutionary France. In short, it can be said that the French republican system, with its idea of the state as one and indivisible, served as model for would-be modern states throughout the world.

Held (1999: 3) argues that empires were *ruled* rather than *governed*. Emperors reigned over a limited social and geographical space, but lacked the administrative

means; i.e. institutions, organizations, information and personnel, to provide regularised administration over their territories. Held explains that the polities of empires were embroiled in perpetual intrigues and conflicts within dominant groups or classes and within local urban centres, and that military force was the principal mechanism for subduing and integrating peoples and territories.

The literature shows that sovereignty, in various spheres, is central to the concept of statehood. Livingston (2000: 7) cites David Hume's observation that the Roman Republic, with its principle of divided sovereignty, was the most energetic and illustrious state system in history. Hume maintained that the *comitia centuries* and the *comitia tribus* represented two distinct legislative bodies: both sovereign and neither subordinate to the other. It is a given that the existence of the state presupposes formal and judicial sovereignty, because this creates a socio-political unit with some measure of autonomy, insulated from outside influences. Thus, the state can be described as based on a symbiotic relationship between subordination and authority in such a manner that each body is conceived as a substantial moral community with something of its own to excel in, to enjoy and to defend.

According to Keen (2001: 165), sovereignty can be defined as supreme and independent political authority. He points out that every sovereign state is bound to respect the independence of every other sovereign state. Held (1999: 37) agrees that the development of state sovereignty is central to the process of mutual recognition whereby states grant each other the right of jurisdiction over their respective territories and citizenry. Thus, the principle of sovereignty establishes entitlement to rule over a bounded territory. McNeill (1982: 1) argues that human beings are inherently territorial: since pre-history, they have felt the need to create territorial boundaries in order to cope with a variety of local issues, such as security and the protection of food sources; eventually, some individuals created boundaries in an effort to control the people within these boundaries, i.e. the group, for their personal gain. It could be asserted that, in an external context, the state is only able to exercise its sovereignty, and thus its autonomy in its dealings with other international systems, once its sovereignty has been internationally recognised.

Sovereignty resides in the people - not as conceived as an aggregate of individuals pursuing their natural rights, but rather as a corporation of independent social entities. It follows that sovereignty is non-divisible and is jointly shared by those independent social authorities whose symbiotic relationship constitutes the state. In his canonical work, *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes argues that the state is composed of individuals who originally existed in an amoral and apolitical natural state where they were free to act out any and all desires. Therefore, the state must allow individuals to contract each other in such a way that a sovereign political office, with authority to control individual actions, is established. The Hobbesian theory of state remains fundamental to an understanding of the doctrine of sovereignty as indivisible, irresistible and infallible.

As far as sovereignty of resources is concerned, Mazrui (1995: 28) addresses the issue of sovereign oversight. He argues that very few African states exercise effective control over their countries' resources. The activities of mining and oil companies, the distant setting of coffee and cocoa prices and rampant corruption all contribute to the drastically diluted concept of resource sovereignty in Africa.

2.3 The modern state

Held (1999: 45) defines the modern state as a nation-state or political apparatus free of distinction between ruler and ruled, with supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territorial area and backed by a legitimate claim to the monopoly of coercive power based on a minimum level of support and loyalty from its citizens. It would seem that the legitimate claim to monopoly of force with the dual aims of pacifying the population and breaking down rival centres of power and authority within the nation-state constitutes a major achievement of the modern state.

Migdal (1988: 16) quotes Nettle and Skocpol in saying that the modern state also represents a great achievement in terms of production and the establishment of unparalleled material prosperity. It functions in the same way as an empire in that its primary task is to rule and not to issue commands concerning substantial goods.

However, it also stands to reason that, although the modern state is a great political achievement, it can act as a destructive economic force.

According to Opello & Rostow (1999: 3), armies, centralised administrations, territorial economies and legal systems are the pillars of modern territorial states. Once a state possesses these attributes, its sovereignty is assured. They point out that every state strives to maintain its sovereign territoriality against others. Sovereignty shapes the geographical space of the state and economic wealth is increasingly used by different states to enhance their capacity to wage war.

Another important qualification of sovereignty that has bearing on the present study, is the notion of popular sovereignty, which lies at the centre of three major modern states: Great Britain (with its parliamentary system), the United States of America (liberal federalism) and France (a liberal republican system). In all three cases, liberalism established conditions for internal protection and private expansion while simultaneously preserving the state's capacity to provide public justice and organize for war.

Opello & Rostow (1999: 93) mention that the transformation of the liberal state in the context of post-war Western history led to the emergence of what has been termed the managerial state. This form of government retains an explicit commitment to capitalism and liberalism and is characterized by a continued distinction between civil society and state. However, through the creation of an extended bureaucracy, the managerial state makes significant intrusions into the domain of civil society by organizing welfare, regulating the national economy and managing political participation. The desirability and bona fides of such governmental capability to extract, penetrate, regulate and appropriate is debatable.

Nettle (in Evans, 1997: 79) argues that the modern state is by nature interventionist and bureaucratic. Although he concedes that it is in a process of deregulation and decentralization through the shedding of entire bureaus and the

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relegating of their rule-making functions to markets, he points out that the state retains the ultimate authority over such arrangements. This results in a tenuous distinction between state and civil society, since the former assumes responsibility for monitoring, organizing and controlling all forms of political and socio-economic activities within its territory. Migdal (1988: 15) points out that the state has become part of the natural landscape in Western countries: its presence and authority behind so many of the rules that shape the minutia of everyday life have become so pervasive that it is difficult for people to imagine the situation being otherwise.

Migdal's work (cited by Evans, 1997: 80) seems to suggest that strong societies result in weak states, and that one of the pre-conditions for the emergence of strong states is "massive societal dislocation", which severely weakens social control. However, Guillermo O'Donnell (in Evans, 1997: 81) argues that a crisis in the state leads to a degeneration of civil society, in which community organization and civic engagement are replaced by an "angry atomisation".

Finally, it has to be noted that the globalisation of trade has transformed state autonomy and induced shifts in state policy. Held (1999: 188) affirms that global regulation of trade by such international bodies as the World Trade Organization undermines the Westphalian notion of state sovereignty. However, it might be argued that globalisation is not the only issue chipping away at sovereignty. It is only one factor in a process that also includes high finance and production.

2.4 The role and function of the state

According to Huntington (1998: 33), states are the principal, as well as the *only*, important actors in world affairs. They maintain armies, conduct diplomacy, negotiate treaties, fight wars, and control international organisations and influence and shape production and commerce to a considerable degree.

In an attempt to define the role of the state, Smith (1999: 172) argues from the premise that “state” represents both the *institution* and the *process* at the centre of government. Building on the ideas of Max Weber, he affirms that the state is the embodiment of a political system as a set of social relationships with the purpose of conversion by legitimate physical coercion, laws, regulations, investment, and such like. Based on this idea, it can be argued that the state as organisation or institution is composed of numerous agencies, acting as the authority that institutes implements and coordinates various sets of rules and regulations. Weber (in Migdal, 1988: 19) recalls the idea-type definition of state in arguing that the various agencies that constitute the state should be led and coordinated by a body of state leadership that has the authority to make and implement binding rules for the entire population, as well as enforce the parameters of rule-making for other social organisations in a given territory, with recourse to force if necessary.

It should be noted that the above ideas about the role and the function of the state focus on social control. State leaders whose aim it is to mobilise people and resources and to impose a single set of rules on them basically exercise this control. It is generally agreed that the new conception of the state also views the state as the central regulatory element in both political and economic affairs. All governments have the capacity to institute operative rules in their societies. In Migdal’s opinion (1988: 261), social control entails more than just the insinuation, or penetration, of state agencies into society, or even successful extraction of resources. Among other things, it also includes the ability to appropriate resources for particular purposes and to regulate the daily behaviour and affairs of its citizens. Indeed, through carefully controlled and selective disbursement of state resources, officials are able to provide and perpetuate the main components – especially the myths and symbols – that sustain the basic survival strategies of its citizens.

Migdal (1988: 4) is also a proponent of the view that the state is an organization and as such must strive to achieve broad aims of human dignity, prosperity and equity for its citizens; it must be “the chisel in the hands of the new sculptors”. In this sense,

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the role and function of the state is to create social order and to offer unifying conduits through which the passions and aspirations of its citizenry can be channelled.

Mazrui (1995: 2) identifies six crucial functions of the state: (1) control of its sovereignty, (2) control over its territory, (3) sovereign supervision of national resources, including effective and rational extraction of revenues and the provision of goods and services, (4) the creation and maintenance of an adequate national infrastructure, (5) the provision of basic services such as sanitation, education, housing and health care and (6) general governance and the maintenance of law and order.

Livingston (2000: 2) postulates that state dynamism in the twentieth century was characterised by a sustained effort to create and control territorial boundaries and continually transcend them, resulting in ever-changing systems of state as well as a perpetual flux in activities transcending state borders. During the previous century, the state also ceased to be an instrument of internal intervention, as was the case in the Ottoman or the Austro-Hungarian empires, for example. This situation persists in the twenty first century. The modern state enjoys a degree of self-determination and autonomy that serves the interests of external intervention rather than satisfying internal and localised needs. However, the impact of emerging technologies, the ever-extending frontiers of significant policy problems, migration and continual shifts in group identities and loyalties frequently challenge political borders.

In short, the conceptual state has the means to achieve change in society through the penetration and regulation of social relationships, the extraction of resources and the appropriation or use of such resources in determined ways. However, it should be noted that in reality, actual states vary considerably in the degree to which they fit this ideal type.

When the above analysis of the functions of the state is applied to Africa, it becomes patently clear that many African states are in dire straits. As a case in point,

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the DRC has lost sovereign control over that portion of its territory that has been occupied by rebel forces. As a result, it has also lost control of all resources, infrastructure, revenue, social services and general governance in these areas.

Belgium colonised the DRC in 1877, when King Leopold II commissioned journalist Henry Morton Stanley to explore the Congo, secure treaties with local chiefs and establish the contacts needed to form a commercial monopoly of the land. Leopold named this area the Congo Free State and immediately began exploiting its natural resources. Korabell (1998) agrees that in 1874, Henry Stanley became the first Westerner to get to the interior of the Congo basin and survive to tell the tale. At the time, the competition for colonies was intense; in the late 19th century, such colonies were to a European state's power what market share is for corporations today. Sitting in his immense palaces in tiny Belgium, King Leopold finagled his way into gaining control of the Congo basin. Within a decade of Stanley's journey, Leopold ruled a territory bigger than England, France, Germany, Spain and Italy combined. To keep this colony profitable, torture and execution were used to force native to work in the mines.

Belgian rule in the Congo included missionary efforts to civilise and Christianise native Africans, and many Congolese citizens were educated at the secondary level or higher. In 1908, King Leopold II of Belgium was forced to cede his scandal-ridden private colony to Belgium, in the early 1950s, these educated individuals - known as évolués - became unhappy with how they were being treated and petitioned the colonial government for reform. The évolués demand for independence erupted into riots in 1959.

Although the Belgian government was reluctant to let go of the Congo's vast resources, it realised it had neither the force nor the authority to maintain control. At the Brussels Round Table Conference of 1960, the Belgian government granted Congo its independence. In May of that year, national elections were held. Joseph

Kasavubu was elected president of DRC, and Patrice Lumumba was named Prime Minister.

Since 1960 Congo has been known variously as the Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Zaire, and again, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Congo's government was troubled from the beginning. Merely five days after independence was granted, violent conflict erupted between Belgian and Congolese citizens, as well as among Congolese ethnic groups. Lumumba asked the United Nations to intervene. The UN Security Council authorised a military force to remove Belgian troops and restore order to the land. When they were unable to do so quickly, Lumumba asked the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for help. It provided Lumumba's troops with weapons and military training.

Turner (2002:1) agrees that the Belgians did little to prepare their Congolese subjects for the transition to independence. When political parties did emerge, most of them were ethnic or regional in scope. The most successful party, the Congolese National Movement of Patrice Lumumba (MNC/Lumumba) was nationalist and pan-African. However, it gained barely a third of the seats in parliament. Lumumba governed Congo only for a few months before he was overthrown and murdered. He was a victim of his Congolese rivals, including his former aide Joseph Mobutu, but the U.S. and Belgium were also involved.

Under the guise of fighting the spread of communism, the U.S. backed rebel Mobutu Sese Seko in a military coup that resulted in Lumumba's seizure, torture and execution. Because this move was motivated more by U.S. interests in the vast mineral resources of this area than in securing a peaceful future for DRC, U.S. efforts to establish a stable government after the uprising were half-hearted.

Turner (2002) agrees that in November 1965, Mobutu seized power, inaugurating 32 years of personalistic, kleptocratic rule. He reversed territorial fragmentation and supported expression of ethnicity. At the same time, favouritism toward his own

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region (Equateur) and ethnic group (Ngbandi) kept ethnic resentment alive. Kell (2000:1) asserts that Mobutu began his rule by crushing rebel forces in outlying provinces and executing dissidents. He created a singular state party of which membership was mandatory and changed the name of DRC to Zaire. Mobutu nationalised foreign businesses, reclaiming copper and diamond mines in the Shaba region.

One can agree that Mobutu's reign was notoriously corrupt. Public funds from diamond mining were used for private gain. Zaire's people, meanwhile, were poor. Mobutu maintained power by portraying himself as anti-Communist, gaining financial and military support from the U.S. and France. However, as the Cold War came to an end, so too did Mobutu's power.

The U.S. severed ties with Mobutu in 1997 as the rebel group Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo, led by Laurent Kabila and backed by the nations of Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Burundi and Eritrea, advanced. On May 16, 1997, Kabila's army took control of the capital city of Kinshasa. Mobutu stepped down from power, and Kabila declared himself head of the government.

2. 5 The fall of Mobutu

Mobutu's illness, (which necessitated a fourth month stay in Europe) combined with the political and military legacy of the 1994 Rwandan refugee crisis, proved to be the turning point in his rule. The government of premier minister Kengo Wa Dondo was left to confront a rapid escalation of violence in the eastern provinces of north and south Kivu. Rwanda Hutu militiamen and former soldiers who had fled their own country in 1994, fearing retribution, had been allowed to mingle freely with civilian refugees, and had turned the refugee camps into bases for rearmament. According to Mthembu (2001:367) from the mid-1996, for instance Rwandan Militia actively began to carve out a strategic territory in for themselves in eastern Zaire with the support of local – based Hutus and other members of the Zairian Armed Forces (FAZ), killing and expelling local and other ethnic groups.

Mthembu (2001:367) believes that the picture of the crisis in the DRC Congo was complicated by historical rivalries in the Great Lakes regions, including widespread resentment of Tutsis resident in south Kivu (Known locally as Banyamulenge) and, a long running dispute over their entitlement to Zairian nationality. The conflict soon spread further south, and in early October 1994 the deputy Governor of south Kivu ordered the Banyamulenge to leave the country within a week. Although the order subsequently suspended, it provoked the mobilisation of a powerful Tutsi Militia, which according to many supporters from the Tutsi dominated Rwandan government and its close regional ally Ugandan, made rapid advances against the combined forces of Hutu and the poorly trained and undisciplined FAZ.

What had initially been a regional movement, seeking to defend the Tutsi population and to disempower extremist Hutus, soon gathered momentum and emerged as a national rebellion aiming to overthrow the Mobutu regime. Its rebels were joined by dissidents of diverse ethnic origin to form the Alliance de Force Democratiques pour la Liberation du Congo (AFDL), lead by Laurent Desire Kabila, an active opponent of the Mobutu regime since 1960's. Mthembu (2001:362) agrees that the Banyamulenge rebels were joined by the dissidents of diverse ethnic origin to form the Alliance des Forces démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire (AFDL). Soon to join the AFDL were the Katangese gendarmes, who had fought for the Angolan Government in its long-term civil conflict against the União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA).

Lemarchand (2000: 36) observes that the overthrow of Mobutu to power was orchestrated by Kagame, and assisted by troops from Rwanda, Uganda and Angola. The current war in the DRC is the result of socio-ethnic discrimination in the Great Lakes region. The Banyamulenge, an ethnic group of Rwanda origin was at its core. Shear (1999:90) argues that in the origin of the war in the DRC, the AFDL and its rebellion was a Rwanda creation. At its core was the Banyamulenge, a Tutsi ethnic group that, despite having settled in Congo in the nineteenth century had been denied citizenship by Mobutu's administration. One could agree that Tutsi are found not only in Rwanda and Burundi but also in North and South Kivu, southern Uganda, and

Western Tanzania. Kabemba (1999: 16) believes that Kabila distanced himself from the Banyamulenge in order to create his own clientelist network among the Congolese. For the Congolese Tutsi, there was no other route to fight for their right than taking up arms against the government they had created.

One would agree that exclusion rather than a clash of civilisation is the key to an understanding of the crisis in the Great Lakes. The exclusion of Hutu elements from a meaningful share of power in Burundi, the exclusion of Tutsi residents in Rwanda (and the “near abroad”) from participation in the social life of the country, and the withdrawal of citizenship rights from the Banyarwanda populations of Eastern Congo are critical elements behind the hardening of Hutu – Tutsi relations in Rwanda and Burundi and the simmering conflict between Banyarwanda and non - Banyarwanda in eastern Congo. According to Newton (1989: 211) politically, Belgium did absolutely nothing to prepare the Congo for independence. Political parties in West Africa began in 1915. In the Belgian Congo, they weren’t allowed before 1955. For years the Belgians had simplified their rule by playing one African tribe off against another. The signification of this regional configuration could be interpreted by Samuel Huntington as the “Kin country syndrome”, a situation in which ethnic fault lines to replicate each other across national boundaries, thus creating a deadly potential ethnic conflict to expand and escalate. “As the conflict becomes more intense”, Huntington writes, “each side attempts to rally support from countries and groups sharing its civilisation. Support in one or more kin countries or groups”. In the mobilisation of ethnic fault lines across boundaries lies one of the keys to an understanding of the dynamics of violence in the Great Lakes.

Mthembu (2001:367) agrees that the AFDL’s success in 1996 exacerbated anti-Tutsi sentiment in Kinshasa. In November 1996 transitional parliament HCR-PT demanded the expulsion of all Tutsis from Zairian territory; following attacks on Tutsis and their property, many Tutsi residents of Kinshasa fled across the river to Brazzaville, in the Republic of the Congo

Lemarchand (2001:6) agrees that what, then, accounts for the failure of the state in the DRC, are the historical continuities between the horrors of the Leopoldian system and Mobutu's brutal dictatorship. In the last analysis, Mobutu himself must be seen as the determining agent behind this vertiginous decline of the state.

2.6 Kabila assumes power

On 16 May 1997 Mobutu left Kinshasa via Gbadolité, then to Morocco, where he died on September 1997. On 17 May AFDL troops entered Kinshasa encountering no resistance and Kabila speaking from Lubumbashi, (the second large city after Kinshasa) declared himself president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mthembu (2002: 240) agrees that on 20 May 1997 Kabila arrived in Kinshasa, and on 22 May the AFDL forces captured Matadi, giving the AFDL control over nearly all the country.

On 28 July Kabila issued a decree expelling Rwanda members of the armed forces from the country. One can agree that the relationships with Kabila and Rwandese deteriorated after Kabila took the power in 1997. Shearer (1999:93) argues that Kabila could not afford to antagonise his Rwandan and Ugandan backers. He had angered the Rwandans in two ways. First, he neglected their security concerns. The Rwandans, having supported Kabila's effort against Mobutu's efforts to control the movement Hutu rebels in the DRC, who continued to launch destabilising, attacks against Rwanda. This was perhaps inevitable; once installed in Kinshasa, Kabila was bound to become more concerned with Congolese as opposed to Rwandan interest. But the Rwandan leadership's shock and disappointment was also predictable.

Second, once in power, Kabila grew increasingly independent. He restructured his cabinet three times in the course of one year, each time consolidating his own power base, promoting fellow Katangese into powerful positions and marginalising the Tutsis. Shear (1999:93) argues for example that Kabila's chief of staff, James Kabare, was Rwandan and had been a strategist for AFDL rebellion. But wary of the Rwandan influence, Kabila placed his son Joseph to work with him. So, Kabila

growing wary of the demands and increasingly worried that they might depose him announced the expelling of Rwandeses from the DRC in late July 1998.

In early August a rebellion, reportedly receiving aid from France and Rwanda, was launched in the east of the Congo DRC. Rebel forces operating as the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD) swiftly captured the eastern border towns of Goma, Bukavu and Uvira. Kabila as a Rwandan invasion of the DRC denounced this. Rwanda denied any involvement in the rebellion of the DRC. On the 4th of August, the rebels hijacked a plane from Goma airport and flew to the Kitona military base in the West of the DRC. Lemarchand (2000: 340) argues that on the surface, the 1998 rebellion had all the earmarks of a replay of the 1996 anti-Mobutu insurrection. In both instances, the initiative came from Kigali, with the enthusiastic support of Kampala; the point of ignition, logically enough, was Goma, with the Banyamulenge acting as the spearhead of the movement. But the differences were no less significant. Except for the Kivu region where violence has remained fairly constant, the 1996 anti-Mobutist insurrection did not result in major bloodshed among Congolese. The same cannot be said of the 1998 rebellion, in which the cost in human lives was without precedent. Both sides were responsible for unspeakable atrocities against civilian population.

When in early August 1998, a rebellion was launched in the east of the DRC. Rebel forces operating as the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD) helped by Rwanda and Uganda, hijacked a plane and swiftly captured the military base of Kitona and nearby Banana naval installation. Within a week, they captured the DRC's main port of Matadi and Inga hydroelectric dam, which enable them to cut off Kinshasa's electric supply. Zimbabwe and Namibia pledge to assist Kabila. Rwanda and Uganda consolidated control of the Eastern part of the DRC and captured a series of small towns in other regions. Janes Sentinel Security Assessment (www.janes.com) states that the rebel groups in the DRC saw Kabila as an obstacle to peace, and seemed more optimistic that peace could now be achieved after his assassination.

So far, after numerous unsuccessful attempts, Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and the DRC in Lusaka signed a cease-fire agreement on the 10 July 1999. The three anti-Kabila rebel factions, however, initially refused to sign, largely due to internal leadership differences, eventually signing on 31 August 1999.

Chapter 3:

The collapse of the state in Africa

3.1 The state in Africa during pre-colonial and colonial times

With all due respect to Lonsdale's proposition that, "[o]therwise than in myths, states do not have origins: they are formed", there seems to be a general consensus that contemporary African states can trace their origins back to the colonial era, when the institutions and social groupings of colonial society came into existence (Filatova, 2001: 6). In this regard, Filatova quotes Bayart's assertion that the vicissitudes of conquest and the modalities of colonial exploitation formed the germ of present-day states in Africa. European powers, spurred on by their own economic, political and cultural considerations, set about carving up the world, creating colonial empires through conquest and subjugation.

The Soviet anthropologist, Dmitri asserts that European powers had already entertained the same idea almost two decades earlier (1983: 182). In his view, colonialism engendered a special type of social development; a gradual process that would culminate - after a century of colonial subjugation in Africa - in those social conditions that would define the future of the newly independent countries. The winning of formal independence did not signal the end of colonialism; Mazrui (1995: 1) agrees that decolonisation started with the collapse of the colonial state and the subsequent disintegration of colonial structures, an often cruel and bloody process.

The colonial state provided the mould in which modern-day African states were cast. In order to govern their colonial territories, the colonising powers created states in order to establish colonial rule as a system of direct political control over the colonized societies. The main function of these states was to act as intermediaries between the European capitals and their colonies (Filatova, 2001: 7). In this capacity, the colonial state, rather than the capitals of empire, played a decisive role in colonial

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administration. It provided labour for the mines and plantations, introduced cash crops and maintained law and order. All these functions could only be performed successfully with the aid of local agents and institutions of power. Williams (2001: 3) maintains that because of this feature of colonialism, African nationalists sought state power as a means of transferring control of political offices and economic resources from foreign powers to Africans, because control of the state implied the authority to rule.

Filatova (2000: 29) points out that the pre-colonial African state commonly existed in the absence of the state borders, depending on the degree of social stratification within it. Thus, the state was manifold, and the impact of the state formation was based on the historicity of the state. A floating elite, weakly attached to their corresponding communities in an socio-economic sense characterised it. Lineage and clan played a major role, and a system of patronage supported the various lineages as well as the entire state structure.

In pre-colonial times, African states were highly centralized around the person of the state ruler, (usually bearing the title of King or Chief, and typically the head of the lineage or clan), and all authority ultimately resided in him. For example, the chief had the power to dispose of the state land (i.e. the land of the lineage or clan) at will – often to bestow favours on his retinue - because this land was considered his private property. Filatova (2000: 29) cites the example of the Kabaka area of Buganda (in Uganda) to illustrate this point. Similarly, the king or chief held absolute power to decide the fate not only of his own subjects, but of all people within his political or military reach: the examples of Ghana, the former Mali empire of Soundiata Keita, the Congo empire and the Zulu of Shaka all clearly illustrate how whole tribes, groups or lineages could be subjugated and appropriated by the strongest ruler. The will of the ruler was supreme in all things. Thus, it can be said that the pre-colonial African state was personalized, i.e. there was no differentiation between personality, institution and function.

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The confusing and often confused issue of ethnicity is one of the most controversial and widely misunderstood aspects of Africa's historical legacy. Filatova mentions that, to complicate matters further, colonial powers often intervened in the process of succession, regulating or even changing the functions and accepted rights of rulers in order to serve their own needs. Hence, in societies where political institutions were weak or non-existent, new mechanisms and institutions of power were introduced without much regard for existing governing structures, except in those cases where such existing structures could be incorporated into the colonial strategy (2000: 18).

In this regard, a prominent British colonial official, John Ainsworth (in Mungeam, 1966: 129-130), wrote in 1950 that the colonial administration encouraged any individuals with strong personalities and went to some lengths to increase their power as soon as they demonstrated loyalty to their colonial masters. Ainsworth suggests that colonial administrators only became concerned about the degree of traditionalism of their new allies later, when they realized that these allies would prove worthless if they did not enjoy some degree of legitimacy in the eyes of their compatriots. He claims that the British administration was faced with two main difficulties in their attempts to establish a system of local authorities: one was to find suitable (i.e. dynamic, loyal and reliable) individuals to take on these duties; the other was to ensure that the local people would in fact subject themselves to a representative of their tribe. Thus, it can be argued that European preconceptions and expectations about African cultures constrained African political processes within the category of tribe, thereby encouraging Africans to think along an ethnic paradigm (Mungeam, G., 1966: 129-130).

Pfaff (1995: 3) agrees with the assessment of ethnicity as a European construct, and asserts that any attempt to redraw African borders along ethnic lines would seem certain to accelerate political disintegration and inspire new conflicts. Indeed, it is now generally accepted in Western circles that the categorization of African peoples into tribes and ethnic groups are basically repressive colonial inventions and that, essentially, nothing distinguishes the Zulu from the Xhosa, the Masai from the

Kikuyu or the Tutsi from the Hutu, the Western sciences of technology and anthropology notwithstanding.

3.2 The post-colonial African state

According to Chabal (1992: 68), a post-colonial state, whatever its nature, is the outcome of a protracted historical process by which various political communities and various principles of political accountability have combined to give birth to the independent, and now sacrosanct, nation-state. It is worth noting that the advent of the post-colonial era in Africa coincided with the Cold War. The implications were two-fold. Not only was the prevalent world order and global dynamics not conducive to democratisation during the three decades following the end of the colonial era in Africa, but there was also a continued and elevated degree of First World intervention in African affairs. Both the United States and the Soviet Union supported various states for their own benefit, thus saving these states from disintegration for decades. It would be reasonable to suggest that during this time, the international face of the African state outstripped its domestic reality in importance.

Filatova (2000: 10) asserts that colonialism was not the first link in the chain of the historicity of the African state. Both colonial and post-colonial Africa had a powerful pre-colonial legacy. However, the study of the continuity from pre-colonial to colonial and through to post-colonial times remained muted for a long time, possibly because of its perceived political inappropriateness. Balandier (1966: 42) points out that interest in the continuity from colonial to post-colonial societies emerged in the late 1950's and early 1960's; however, the interpretation of the pre-colonial era only began in the 1990's.

According to Bayart (1994: 21-23), the pre-colonial legacy reveals itself to be most significant and enduring in the comparison of pre-colonial and post-colonial societies. He outlines several features of pre-colonial modality that played, and continues to play, a decisive role in the social construction of the African state: low

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productivity, attempts by the state to augment its procurement through the mobilization of resources based on a (possibly) unequal relationship with the external environment, political fragmentation as a result of secession and the significant socio-political impact of lineage structures. Bayart points out that these features are interconnected: they strengthen and complement one another.

The post-colonial African state was also weakened by the absence of life-threatening external pressures. With the continued backing of the major Cold War powers, post-colonial African states were protected from outside danger by strong international norms. In a sense, one could say that they were reduced to the status of “pseudo-states”, lacking any true sovereignty. Clapham (1998: 154) maintains that there is a tendency towards privatisation of power in weak states: “In parts of Africa, at least, the management of the ostensibly public powers of internationally recognised states has been so radically privatised as to render statehood an entirely apposite formula for understanding either their domestic politics or their external relations”.

It seems obvious at this juncture that post-colonial African states suffered from an absence of any real sovereignty. It is true that the actual room for manoeuvre of post-colonial state elites had narrowed in some respects. However, post-colonial governments have always proved relatively weak and subject to international and domestic pressure. As emphasised by Clapham’s analysis, the “sovereignty game” of weak post-colonial states is an important cause for state failure, because it creates the very situation in which failure is likely to occur. If there were successful and effective development in these states, failure would be highly unlikely. Clapham argues that if the international community had “decertified” these states and taken responsibility for their development, failure would also have been less likely (1998: 143).

Sola & Sesay (1998: 4) agree that the political problems facing contemporary Africa can be attributed to its colonial legacy. As a result of the way in which the East-West rivalry of the Cold War distorted African politics, these issues were never resolved satisfactorily after independence, but rather put on hold. They also agree that the inherent weakness of African states is primary among these problems. They

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maintain that this weakness is due largely to low levels of political legitimacy and national integration, and augmented by a limited democratic political culture, at least in terms of the Western interpretation and practice of the ideals of democracy.

However, the most striking feature of the colonial and post-colonial African state, and arguably the most damaging, is its artificial nature. Most African states were “created” with arbitrary borders that did not correspond to traditional boundaries; only a limited number of post-colonial African states retained any meaningful aspects of their pre-colonial identity. Sola & Sesay (1998: 4) point out that the populations of the newly independent African states comprised vastly heterogenous communities in terms of language, ethnicity, religion and culture. The already existing social schisms were exacerbated by the differential impact of colonialism and the penetration of the market economy, and became the determining feature of political independence in Africa. The rulers of the newly independent states set out from a position of fragile national unity, and in the interim they have been largely unable, and in many cases unwilling, to create durable bonds of unity that supersedes sub-national loyalties within their states. Young (in Filatova, 2000: 6) affirms that the lack of national unity in African states has resulted in the rise of disaffected groupings based on ethnicity, regionalism and religion, as well as military and civil authoritarian regimes aimed at containing and suppressing them.

Chabal (1986: 2) also emphasises the sustained negative influence of Western powers on Africa. He claims that, in the same way that colonial institutions were forced on African societies in the past, democratic institutions are being imposed on them at present, with complete disregard of the absence of institutionalised civil societies, democratic traditions and behavioural patterns and, perhaps most importantly, the appropriate class and social structures which could generate and nurture them. Thus, Chabal blames the weakness of the African state on its artificial construction on colonial foundations, as opposed to an organic development originating in a strong civil society.

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Huntington (1968: 34) disagrees somewhat with this assertion. He argues that values, culture and institutions are perversely influenced by the manner in which states define their interests, and maintains that these interests are inevitably not shaped only by domestic values and institutions, but also by international norms and institutions.

3.3 The relationship between Western and African states

Chabal (1992: 69) asserts that if post-colonial African states resembled their European counterparts, it was because they had been designed thus. However, superficial resemblances and state decrees notwithstanding, it would be a mistake to assume that these states functioned in the same way as the European democracies that spawned them, because this would mean taking for granted a historical causality, which did not in fact exist. Thus, Chabal argues that political analysis of post-colonial African states is based on flawed reasoning: instead of starting out from a premise of what these states are *assumed* to be, scholars should rather make them, such as they are in reality, the object of their analyses. This is to say that the notion of the modern state in Europe is a concept derived from the analysis of a very specific political development in the history of modern Europe. The same should apply to the notion of the state in Africa.

Chabal's criticism of prevalent interpretations notwithstanding, Migdal (1988: 16) notes some interesting parallels between pre-colonial African states and their historical Western counterparts. In both cases, the state was based on a set of uniform rules and a system of common law and broadly accepted norms. In modern times, the difference between the two has mainly resided in the manner in which state officials have imposed a given set of rules over large territories and the way in which this goal has spanned the globe. Migdal claims that, what distinguishes the modern era from previous epochs, is the transformation or integration of a number of different states into a single state system. The individual state organisations in that system might each have ruled across large territories and populations, which, over time, attained a high degree of homogeny in terms of identity and moral order. Over time, nation-states

grew out of these powerful state organisations and their increasingly homogenous societies.

In the opinion of Sono (1994: 4), one important distinction between contemporary Western and African states is that the latter are constituted by societies that are more rural, more agricultural and less socially and economically developed than the former. They are also subject to various other pressures. These pressures, Sono claims, are the source of their attitude towards dissent. He explains that, before the advent of colonialism, the African continent was characterized by the availability of “free land” and the contingent “exit option”, which attenuated conflict situations. Under colonial rule, this safety valve was closed and as a result (often violent) intolerance of one group towards opposition and dissent from another emerged as a major factor in African politics.

It has to be conceded however that many African states are still in their infancy in terms of world history, and some critics maintain that the principle weakness of many of these states resides in this fact. They assert that, with the passing of enough time, these states will become stronger. It is also widely agreed that African states basically repeat the historical trajectory of their Western predecessors and that it is futile to place undue emphasis on the historical roots of their present-day behaviour. However, although the “mentality of consent”, the system of patronage and the notion of ethnicity are by no means uniquely African phenomena, it has to be noted that the particular manner in which they have been sustained and adjusted at particular historical junctures constitutes the specificity of the African state. One also has to concede that, although comparable to its European counterparts, the African state is confronted with distinct limits to its sovereignty represented by either its colonial heritage or by continuing pressures to conform to the norms and interests of the state system and the world economy, or a combination of both.

Samina (2001: 2) also ascribes the failure of the nation-state in Africa to its colonial and post-colonial roots. She affirms that the contemporary African state was defined by its interaction with imperial systems and its enduring colonial legacy,

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including the creation of arbitrary, albeit it internationally recognized, territorial borders that often fractured pre-existing social formations and internal fragmentation as a result of social, political and economic underdevelopment. She also attributes inadequate institutions of the state power, which have failed to exercise effective centralized economic, administrative and judicial control over all the peoples residing within state boundaries, to colonial rule. In addition, there has been a general failure to integrate social formations based on kinship, regional and tribal affiliation, language and other cultural markers into a national identity from which the nation-state could draw its legitimacy - as was the case in Europe, where the establishment of a national identity preceded the formation of the nation-state and provided a basis for its legitimacy.

In addition to these ills, fragile African states have often resorted to strategies based on the threat or use of force when faced with challenges to the legitimacy of their institutions and authority, rather than taking recourse to cooption and penetration of civil society.

Finally, but not least, widespread economic underdevelopment and social fragmentation have often led to an over-reliance by the authorities of these fragile states on external actors for recognition of their legitimacy and for assistance in retaining and expanding their power. African states are substantially dependent on the international community, especially in the sphere of humanitarian intervention and relief efforts. Even the more successful ones remain highly dependent on outside forces, and must accept a high degree of foreign interference in their political, economic and social affairs. Whereas their Western counterparts represent the ideal of “strong” states, African states are patently “weak”. The distinction is based largely on the capacity of the state to implement economic policies sagaciously and effectively; such capacity being determined by various institutional, technical, administrative and political factors (Myrdal, 1968: 896). A further distinction is made to describe states that have never achieved any significant administrative capacities – such states are described as “soft states”, because they do not possess the political wherewithal to push through any developmental projects.

3.4 Strong versus Weak states

According to Migdal (1988: 4), “strong states” possess advanced capabilities for penetrating society, regulating social relationships, extracting resources and appropriating or using these resources in various predetermined ways. Judged by these criteria, it would seem that African state rate at the low end of the spectrum.

Migdal (1988: 4) argues that the failure of African leaders to impose their authority on the most remote villages affects the coherence and character of the states themselves. Krasner (1985: 28) underscores this point by saying that most developing countries have very weak domestic political institutions, because of the instability and ineffectiveness of their governing bodies, and Huntington concurs that the states of developing countries are weak because their governments simply do not govern (1968: 2). Jackson & Rosberg (1994: 300) define post-colonial African states as “personally appropriated”. As a case in point, in the 1980's Mobutu Sese Seko's wealth was estimated at approximately the same sum as the whole national debt of the former Zaire; during 32 years of absolute power, Mobutu and his henchmen ruined the country by destroying its economy and social fabric.

During the Cold War era, most post-colonial African states enjoyed the support of major donor nations, irrespective, and often in spite, of their domestic agendas, as long as they were perceived as supporting the capitalist or socialist interests of their protectors. The list is long and illustrious: Mobutu was supported by the United States as long as he remained loyal and willing to cooperate with the CIA, while Ethiopia's Mengystu Haile Mariam and Uganda's Idi Amin benefited from Soviet support in return for cooperation with the KGB. Dunn (2001:249) agrees that Mobutu had long maintained close connections with both the Belgian secret service and the CIA. Both this coups in 1960 and 1965 were supported by the CIA. Western intelligence agencies had thrown their support behind Mobutu because they identified him as someone who would serve and protect their interest.

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In recent years, there has been a tendency towards withdrawal of international presence in Africa, but it has been a relative and partial move rather than a consistent trend. Major western powers remain actively present in Africa. France, for example, maintains strong ties with Francophone countries, as is demonstrated by her recent humanitarian intervention in the Central African Republic or her involvement in Rwanda on the eve of the genocide there. The United States is still believed to be a major force behind Rwanda's Paul Kagame and Uganda's Yoweri Museveni. It is also widely acknowledged that major Western companies and multinational corporations continue to hold considerable leverage as far as superpower involvement is concerned, as is illustrated by the wars in Angola and Congo Brazzaville (www.c-r.org/occ_papers/af_media/part1.htm).

There can be no doubt that the West has imposed its political and economic will most efficiently on Africa, resulting in severe restrictions on the political space in African countries and effectively reducing them to what Mkandawire has termed "choiceless democracies" (Cornwell, 1999:3). In effect, the supposedly exclusive right of the state to create its own structures of political authority – an essential ingredient for the establishment of national identity (Deibel, 1993: 23) – and the complementary exclusive executive mandate to devise its own domestic policies without outside interference or prescription (James, 1986: 225) have been seriously compromised in these countries.

3.5 The fragmentation and collapse of the state

Geldenhuys (2001: 10) asserts that the disintegration or fission of the state has a dual character: fragmentation and collapse. The former refers to the break-up of an existing state into two or more independent units, as in the case of the former socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Ethiopia. The fate of these countries provides dramatic illustration of the destructive force of long-suppressed ethno-nationalism.

Boutros-Ghali (1992: 6) argues that in the case of the above countries, the upsurge of fierce new assertions of nationalism and sovereignty caused the fragmentation of the state. He views the collapse of the state as the disintegration of the state institutions, especially the police and judiciary, with a resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown in law and order and subsequent general banditry. Zartman (1995: 1) describes the collapse of the state in similar terms as “a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law and political order have fallen apart.”

These characterisations of the collapsed state correspond to Jackson’s definition of a “quasi-state” (1992: 21), i.e. a state that enjoys juridical statehood, but that is severely deficient in empirical statehood. Quasi-states share the same international rights and responsibilities as other states, but their populations go without many of the advantages usually associated with independent statehood. Jackson maintains that the governments of these states often lack the political will, the institutional authority and the organised power to provide socio-economic welfare and security to their citizens and to protect their basic human rights.

Even if one concedes that the collapse of African states can often be partly attributed to colonialism and its legacy of weak government systems, one can hardly deny the major contributory role of coups, military interventions, civil wars and massacres. It seems that the state in Africa was, and is, doomed to fail through the interaction of a wide range of internal and external factors. The list is long and depressing, as is clear from Geldenhuys’s (2001: 10-11) inventory: the imposition of arbitrarily demarcated and artificial international borders, the lack of preparedness of post-colonial states to assume the responsibilities of the statehood, the structure of the world economy and the activities of multinational corporations, the virtually impossible demands of social and economic development, inappropriate and poorly executed policies, massive corruption among state leaders and the inability to conclude the task of national integration.

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For Reno (2001:3) numbers of factors have helped the collapse of the state in Africa. Looting, personal profit and the manipulation of market are among them. But about post-colonial war in Africa is the extent to which economic interests appear to predominate. This is because these wars occupy a special category of conflict; they are the consequence of the collapse of institutions, and the failure of opposition groups to build alternative ones. They almost always occur in countries where public bureaucracies are riddled with corruption.

Reno (2001:3) agrees that corruption, military interventions, the suppression of human rights, massive embezzlement and wars have been the most obvious signs of the departure of African states from what is commonly perceived as democratic norms. However, the most dangerous symptom of the failing modern African state is civil war. The first one, in Nigeria in 1967-1969, captured the horrified attention of the international community through its tremendous loss of life. Since then, civil war has become a common feature of the political landscape in Africa. In some cases, it even seems as though promoting internal military conflict is regarded as a means to achieving the toppling of a neighbouring regime, or alternatively wins its support.

According to Reno (2001:3) the sub-Saharan Africa suffered its first military coup in 1963; by 2000 military rulers had supplanted civilian governments in more than half of African states. Between 1970 and 1985, 53 out of 74 transfers of power occurred violently. Most African and post-soviet Union warlords originate in this context of fragmented military organisation, and come to the force once the centralising power of the previous strong-man leader collapse. Reno asserts that many rulers of post-colonial states facing these threats to their security have taken pains to buy the loyalty, or at least compliance, of key groups in society. The most efficient way of doing this in short term has been to use state resources and assets as patronage to be distributed at the personal discretion of the ruler. Other rulers increasingly resort to the manipulation of markets to manage their clients. Their loyal associates might be permitted access to economic opportunities, such as smuggling or transactions in illicit goods such as drugs. The ruler increasingly operates like a racketeer, selling

exemption from prosecution or using his control over the state to help his business partners.

3.6 Causes of the state collapse

According to political scientist Stephen Steadman (in Onadipe & Lord, 2001:3), the causes of conflict in Africa can be categorised as power struggles, ethnic rivalry, militarism, alienation and deep-rooted historical, socio-economic and cultural elements. However, one can agree that state collapse in Africa is contingent upon internal and external factors. Internal factors stemming from poverty, lack of economic opportunity, ethnic animosities and a history of political abuse and corruption have fuelled the brutal conflict. External factors have also had a major impact on the duration and ferocity of the conflict, especially the intervention of strong state and the activities of non-state actors, mostly profiteers such as diamond timber and arm traffickers. Reno (2000:301) agrees that weak institutions and lack of economic development favour to open an arena for foreign mercantilists to enter and manipulate rules and rebels. In fact, investors prove able to operate in chaotic environments, in partnership with local rulers to manage local anarchy and to benefit from external order that commercial conventions and foreign government supply.

3.6.1 Contextual factors

Although conflict situations are no the only cause of the state collapse in Africa, Onadipe and Lord (2001:2) note that no corner of the globe is exempt of conflict: Europe, Asia and Latin America have all experienced tremendous carnage and material destruction in the past century. However, while many parts of the world have moved towards greater stability of political and economic cooperation, Africa remains a cauldron of instability. The situational variety of conflict in any society allows for different perspectives and frameworks of analysis: political, historical, social, cultural and psychological, and the broadest attempts at understanding and explaining conflict situations take into account both the internal and external dynamics of these conflicts. In recent years researchers have paid increasing attention to multidisciplinary approaches in their examination of a wide range of conflicts.

Azarya and Chazan (1987: 106) maintain that there is a disengagement of the state in Africa: states are not centred, and the character and capabilities of politics at the centre can be dictated. They claim that the state has an engagement paradigm, which leads to the weakening of the state in some cases. One could add to this the issues of war, violence and the general phenomenon of the state collapse as further causes for the weakening of the state in Africa. Paraphrasing Chris Allen, Breytenbach (2000: 2) states five main theories on the causes of the collapse of the states in Africa: the “new barbarism” theory associated with Robert Kaplan; the “economics of war” theories of Jean and Rufin, Keen and Reno; approaches rooted in the nature of political systems, associated with Chabal and Dalloz; the “globalisation” approach of Kaldor and Duffield, and the socio-cultural approach of Richards, Ellis and Ferme.

Allen (1999:377) agrees for instance that the endemic violence found in a number of African countries is to be sought in the internal dynamics of “spoils politics” in which the primary goal of those competing for political office or power is self-enrichment. He argues that unravelling of these patron-clientelist relations in the logical outcome of the elite capacity and structural violence that characterised neopatrimonial states. In such regimes, corruption is massive and endemic but highly concentrated. Over time, the self-destructive of prebendalism that accompanies such relationships undermines the fiscal capacity of the state, and the state ceases to provide the most basic social services. This induces conflicts, which may assume violent forms and warlordism. The state may in the process lose control over the means of coercion. During this terminal phase characteristic features of the spoil system are intensified, and violence becomes the dominant feature of political interaction and change. There is apparently some length of time over which such states may exist without violence. Prolongation beyond this period will lead to state collapse.

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Azarya and Chazan (1987: 106) remark that the notion of the enfeeblement of the state has been drawn mainly from the experience of sub-Saharan Africa, where the state has proved to be the weakest. Across the spectrum of the state capacities and capabilities, there will naturally be graduation and variation in the strength of different states. The DRC Congo for instance ranks the lowest on the scale. Even in the realm of regulating diamond mining, this country has shown itself powerless: failing in its attempts to control activities that would continue regardless of its efforts to intervene, and has rather opted to legalize them. Sierra Leone can serve also as an example of a state that is fatally weakened by the apparent exclusive attention of its leaders on consolidating and maintaining power and thwarting the growth of any serious alternative centres of power.

Breytenbach (2000: 2) also affirms the apparent continuity since the end of decolonisation of three of Chris Allen's explanations for the prevalence of conflict in Africa, i.e. Kaplan's views of economic war and the nature of African politics and culture. Allen (1999: 367) agrees that African politics in the nineties have been marked by a series of violent breakdowns of order, and in some cases the disappearance of the central state, in a large number of the states. Attempts at the analysis of this phenomenon have involved several different but complementary approaches, notably globalisation, the economics of new war, the crisis of the neo-patrimonial state, or social and cultural factors as keys to explanation. Breytenbach further mentions the economics of war and increasing globalisation as emerging factors underlying conflict

Although many scholars agree that contemporary conflicts in Africa had their origins in the wake of the decline of the Cold War patronage of the superpowers, and their accompanying attempts to export their systems of the state and democracy to the dark Continent, one is compelled to agree with Reno and Keen that conflict is also strongly rooted in the nature of African political systems, as typified in the thinking of Chabal and Dalloz. (Breytenbach, 2000: 2).

It is generally accepted that the conflict in some African states, as in the case of the DRC, can be defined in terms of a war economy, in that the warring parties sustain the intractable conflict through the expropriation and exploitation of the country's resources. This can be supported by Reno's argument (2001: 219) that the problem for Congolese is not necessarily the weakness of their organisations or their demands but that their rulers have been able to dominate the country's abundant natural resources and to call on a wide array of outsiders to help them to do so. However, it might be argued that the cause of the conflict in the DRC is not economic, but can rather be associated with the country's colonial past. Laurie Nathan (1997: 2) holds this position. He believes that the regional conflict in the Great Lakes can be traced back to the legacy of colonial rule, including acute underdevelopment, land shortages and ethnic rivalries. But the most enduring feature of this legacy is the ongoing disputes stemming from the imposition of artificial borders that did not reflect the demographic realities of the region. Ethnic communities are divided by state borders, for example the Tutsi, who are scattered throughout Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and the DRC, and the Lunda, who are dispersed in Angola, Zambia and the DRC.

For Lemarchand (2001: 327), three structural features have helped shaped politics in the Great Lakes region and have set the scene for today's confrontation. Firstly, there is a lack of concurrence between the demographic and geographical maps of the region. Secondly, there is the population density and the resulting pressures on land throughout the region, and finally there is the presence of sizeable refugee populations in all four countries of the region, which has a profoundly divisive impact on the host communities. Lemarchand argues that, in addition to these structural features, a number of other factors have also helped ignite and fuel the current fighting. The most notable of these has been the poor level of governance in the post-independence era, particularly in what is now known as the DRC. The inability of the government in the DRC Congo to protect its border or to prevent insurgents, smugglers, currency manipulators, or militiamen for using its territory to engage in malevolent activities in neighbouring countries invites retaliation.

3.6.2 Ethnic tensions

The previous sections show that post-colonial African states were rendered inherently weak through a complex set of external as well as internal factors that left their new leaders poorly prepared to cope with the general task of governance and to effectively resolve the concrete problems of their particular countries. This resulted in perennial crises, instability and disorder, with ethnicity as the principal rationale behind many of these conflict situations. In the ensuing decades, the political situation in these countries has shown little improvement. Constant power struggles and on-going disputes over artificially created colonial borders, which had divided well-established traditional ethnic groups, continue to be the main driving force behind numerous regional and cross-border conflicts.

Geldenhuis (2001: 12) asserts that ethnic conflict disrupts the authority of central government and its ability to provide essential security and welfare services to its citizens. Thus, it diminishes the state and may precipitate its collapse. Conversely, situations of anarchy subsequent to the collapse of the state may encourage disaffected regions or groups to attempt succession, thus triggering new ethnic conflicts. The ethnic schisms that are such a prominent feature of African, and many other, states today are often related to the scarcity of resources and services, great regional variations and the diverse interests and vulnerabilities among different economic sectors. While new conflicts frequently emerge in Africa, old ones persist and mutate.

Mazrui (1995: 28) agrees that ethnicity plays a major role in the success or failure of the state. He points out that a state can collapse either because it has too many ethnic groups or, paradoxically, because it has too few. By way of illustration, Mazrui notes the examples of Uganda and Somalia. He argues that the failure of the Ugandan state was partly due to the ethnic richness of the society – the striking diversity of Bantu, Nilotic and other groups, each of which is itself internally heterogeneous – and the inability of the Ugandan political system to resist the immense pressures of

competing ethno-cultural claims. The reverse is true for Somalia: the collapse of this state was precipitated by a lack of ethnic diversity. Mazrui argues that, as a result, Somalia's pluralism remained at the level of sub-ethnicity, with a culture that legitimises the clan system - one of the central causes of discord.

3.6.3 Issues of identity, participation, distribution and legitimacy

One way of analysing Africa's violent past and present is by applying a framework of identity, participation, distribution and legitimacy to the problem. Identity relates to the way in which the individual sees him/herself in relations to socially, politically and territorially delineated groups. Participation refers to the subjective experience of the individual regarding his/her access to the political and economic decision-making process and the degree to which s/he perceives this access to result in educational and other beneficial opportunities. Distribution refers to the level of perceived fairness and justice in the sharing of resources such as land, natural resources or educational opportunities. Legitimacy is a product of the population's perceptions about the acceptability of the rules governing political competition (http://www.c-r.org/occ_papers/af_media/part1.htm)

Onadipe and Lord (2001: 3) point out that these potential catalysts of conflict often overlap and reinforce each other. For instance, identity conflicts can coincide with limits on political participation and uneven distribution of scarce resources, as can be observed in many conflicts in Africa. The issue of identity can again often be traced back directly to the imposition of artificial borders, which divided well-established ethnic groups and clubbed together alien and often hostile ones (Filatova, 2000: 8).

3.6.4 Economic causes and market manipulation

The economic nature of many conflicts in Africa has been characterized as follows by the United Nations (in Onadipe and Lord, 2001: 3): “A hostile international economic environment and Africa’s vulnerability to the exchange in external conditions (i.e. terms, goods), external debt burdens, the shift from a global economy based on the exploitation of natural resources (the basis of most African economies) to one based on the exploitation of knowledge and information, declining national incomes accompanied by reduction in social spending, food insecurity, and increased poverty and economic inequities, as well as poor economic performance”. It is not difficult to see how a combination of these factors might nurture and/or aggravate conflicts in an already politically unstable environment.

One can agree that resource extraction has been largely the province of post-independence leaders, many whom followed the lead of their former colonial masters to create vast personal fortune. The current war in the Congo DRC is surprising to extent to which participating states have blatantly advertised the economic motivations underlying their participation. Intervening states have sought a direct share in Congo’s revenues from extraction of mineral and other resource. Reno (<http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/vi/3/4.htm>) agrees that both Mobutu and Kabila were manipulating the market. Kabila’s strategies show remarkable continuity with Mobutu’s, with an even greater emphasis on external partners in lieu of a domestic patronage network grafted onto a state administration.

One can agree that once Laurent Kabila took power, he became an attractive commercial partner to several mining companies. The increasingly competitive nature of the mining business in Africa, with many new firms adapted to doing business in tough places, generated a broader range of potential partners for Laurent Kabila. He recognised the centrality of resource exploitation to his war effort, and welcomed foreign firms, provided their paid a “war tax”. The Wall street journal report goes on to say “What makes this new scramble for a chunk of Congo’s vast natural wealth

significant is that it is being undertaken by black Africans. For centuries, Europeans and Americans were players in central Africa, sending troops, selling arms and fighting wars on behalf of various

local leaders in exchange for ivory, rubber, diamonds and mineral rights. Now it's the turn of Africans themselves to make a play for Congo's riches, and the Congolese ruler is leading the charge. Callaghy (1984:141) for instance observed that Congolese rulers' masterfully manipulated relations with creditors, alternating with brinkmanship to keep loans coming. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) returned to the DRC Congo (Zaire) in 1983 after a five year absence, and proceeded to disburse \$1.3 billion to Mobutu's government over the next five years.

Reno believes that Mobutu's rejection of conventional state building and specific features of his patrimonial politics reshaped Zaire's political economy. Zaire boasts much commercial and diplomatic opportunity that can be translated into political resources. Taking 1986 as a base line, before mineral exports began to fall precipitously, copper, cobalt, zinc and diamond exports of sale-run firms generated \$1.15 billion in the formal economy. Coffee, the country's main agricultural export, added \$80 million. This left uncounted profits from money laundering, illicit exports and drug trade, which Mobutu translated into patronage when he exercised direct control over exchange of these goods.

According to Bratton & Van de Walle (1998:277) in neopatrimonialism regimes, the chief executive maintains authority through patronage, rather than ideology or law. The ineluctable process of decline engendered by patrimonialism is said to generate a range of responses among citizens, including voices through which citizens openly articulate their discontent, and "exit", where citizens sullenly withdraw from spaces dominated by state.

3.6.5 The colonial legacy

As has been stated numerous times, the legacy of colonialism is often cited as a primary and continuing source of conflict in Africa. Onadipe and Lord (2001: 3) assert that, with hundreds of ethnic and linguistic groups lumped together in about fifty countries, the majority of whose borders were determined arbitrarily by colonial powers with scant consideration for existing ethnic boundaries, state-building and the implantation of nationalist ideals have proved very difficult. To aggravate matters, African politicians and military leaders have too often chosen to consolidate their position, and that of their immediate support groups, by manipulating communal and internal competition around issues such as the allocation of resources, religion, identity, territory and political participation. The result has often been communal warfare. However, it can hardly be denied that, by dividing ethnic groups, cutting through shared resources and impeding economic and social mobility, colonial borders often contribute to the tensions that spawn conflict.

3.6.6 Democratisation

Conflict in Africa has also been explained in terms of the clash between agents of modernisation and democratisation on the one hand and entrenched forces in society on the other. Breytenbach (2000: 2) argues that the economics of war and globalisation, combined with the redemocratisation drive, constitute new causes of conflict in Africa. The resistance to democratisation is easily understood against the background of leadership manipulation in African nation-states, where control is often authoritarian and based on systems of economic and social patronage and the ideas of pluralism, transparency and participative decision-making are rare commodities. Without open and responsive policies that are seen to be fair by a majority of the citizenry, those in power remain the sole winners and the governed are the perpetual losers. Onadipe & Lord (2001: 3) characterizes the leaders of many African states as

irresponsible in their desperate clinging to the trappings and benefits of power and their obstinate refusal to accept political compromise and possible defeat, alternance and peaceful competition. It is painfully obvious that conflict will remain a feature of the African experience as long as such leadership is allowed to persist and flourish on the continent.

Dunn (2001:257) agrees that as the anticipated promises of decolonisation faded, Zaire became once again a popular symbol for all that was wrong with postcolonial Africa. Zaire, symbolising the failure of Africans to modernise, democratise and develop, became synonymous with corruption, ineptitude and unrest. These elements were often personified in representations of Mobutu. Perhaps no other African leader, save for Idi Amin, was more recognisable to Western audiences as symbolic of Africa's postcolonial failures. Mobutu was no longer seen as proud authentic displays of African heritage, but rather as physical markings of Zaire's difference and backwardness or as hallow props used to cloak a repressive and exploitative dictator.

3.6.7 Psychological and biological factors

The analysis of psychological and biological factors offers yet another perspective on conflict, aggression and violence. The American academic Francis Fukuyama is a proponent of this school of thought: "...modern biology suggests that animals as well as men engage in prestige battles, though no one would assert that the latter are moral agents." Fukuyama argues that controlling the aggressive tendencies of its young men is a basic social problem that society must face up to. In hunter-gatherer societies, the predominant cause of violence is sexual domination, a situation that also remains characteristic of domestic violent crime in contemporary post-industrial nations.

The picture that emerges from the above discussion is one of widespread societal conflict played out against a backdrop of extreme poverty, illiteracy and weak systems of governance. Undermined by unfavourable terms of trade and debt,

administrative failures to respond to societal needs, underdeveloped infrastructure, low levels of education and widespread corruption, governments are hard pressed to also cope with the added complication of ethnic, communal, religious and regional rivalries within their borders.

Chapter 4:

The cycle of crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

4.1 Profile of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Capital:

Kinshasa

Area:

2,345,410 km² (905,365 miles²)

Population:

51,964,999 (July 2000 est.)

Ethnic groups:

Over 200 African ethnic groups of which the majority are Bantu; the four largest tribes – Mongo, Luba, Kongo (all Bantu), and the Mangbetu-Azande (Hamitic) constitute about 45 % of the population

Official language(s):

French. Kikongo, Swahili, Chiluba and Lingala are the national languages.

Religious groups:

Roman Catholic 50 %; Protestant 20 %; Kimbanguist 10%; Muslim 10 % and other (Syncretic sects and indigenous beliefs) 10 %

Industry and Commerce:

Mining, mineral processing, consumer products (including textiles, footwear, Processed foods and beverages), cements, diamonds.

Administrative subdivisions:

10 provinces and Kinshasa city

Sectors of government participation:

Energy, Mining and Finance

Currency exchange system:

Floating

Exchange rate:

Congolese Francs (CF) per US\$ - 4,5 (January 2000), 2,5 (January 1999)

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Status of the press:

No press freedom

Head of the state:

Joseph Kabila Jr. Assumed power after the assassination of his father, Laurent Désiré Kabila.

State officials:

Katumba Mwanke, Minister at the Presidential Office

Che Ukitundu, Foreign Affairs Minister

Mwenze Nkongolo, Security Minister

Moleka Nzolama, Sports and Recreation Minister

Constitution:

24 June 1967, amended August 1974, revised 15 February 1978, amended April 1990; transitional constitution promulgated in April 1994. Following successful rebellion, new government announced on 29 May 1997 a program of constitutional reform, November 1998 draft constitution approved by President Kabila, awaiting ratification by national referendum.

Elections:

Results of the last election before the coup: Mobutu elected President without opposition. When Kabila came to power in May 1997, he announced a two-year time table for political reform leading to elections by April 1999; December 1998, Kabila announced that elections would be postponed until all foreign military forces attempting his overthrow had withdrawn from the country.

Legislature:

Legislative activity has been suspended pending the establishment of Kabila's promised constitutional reforms and elections. The country's first legislative elections had been scheduled for May 1997, but were not held; instead Kabila overthrew the Mobutu government and seized power. Kabila nominated a Parliament in late 2000.

Source: "Africa South of the Sahara, 2001"

4.2 The relationship between state and society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Contemporary analysis of the state-society relations that determine the nature of the state has varied considerably. One might argue that social solidarity, such as tribalism, within the Democratic Republic of the Congo present an alternative to the state, although paradoxically the tribe often functions as a mini-state unto itself and frequently aspires to

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capturing the state and becoming its centre. According to Barnett (1995: 5), the tribe is anti-state; it may contain the germ of future states and it can crystallise mini-states internally. Other scholars stress that tribalism and other substance identities pose a threat to the state in the modern world, where they more often represent a strategy for control of the state or of social resistance.

Weiss (1995: 157) maintains that it is a gross exaggeration to say that the DRC has a *government*, since there has never been a *nation* in the DRC. Analysing the internal functioning of the Congolese state as it existed in 1960 (at independence), Weiss believes that the state's responsibility to promote the welfare of its citizens was almost totally neglected, and he asserts that, at present, little remains of the state's role as a provider of health care, education, justice, maintenance of the country's infrastructure, etceteras.

Nzongola (1986: 3) agrees that the DRC is a country in crisis. After 25 years of independence, including thirty years of relative political stability under the rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko, there is virtually no improvement in the quality of life of ordinary men, women and children. At the same time, the rulers of the country continue to enrich themselves in the face of the misery of their constituents, and moreover to enjoy the support of major world powers and other African statesmen. Ordinary citizens live in a state of permanent insecurity as a result of the extortion and brutality to which the security forces and collectors of revenue subject them. Nzongola (1986: 30) argues that the political crisis in the DRC is basically the result of a fundamental breakdown in the equilibrium of the social structure. The peak of the political crisis comes when the political system finds itself at an impasse, for even as the power that holds it together is falling apart, no alternative political force steps into the breach. As such, the crisis is a moment of truth for both the system and the social groups that constitute it.

Nzongola asserts that the collapse of the present-day DRC is inextricably linked to the nature of the state as shaped by its interaction with the imperialist system and/or other

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legacies of colonialism. These include the encouragement of dictatorship and the creation of arbitrary state borders characterised by divided social formations, internal fragmentation as a result of social, political and economic underdevelopment and inadequate institutions of the state power that have failed to effectively perform administrative and economic functions and exercise judicial and political control over all the peoples residing within state boundaries. Group identity and social formations based on tribe and other markers of ethnicity have also not been successfully integrated into a national identity from which a Congolese nation-state could draw its legitimacy.

Faced by several challenges to the legitimacy of its institutions and authority, the inherently weak DRC state has relied on strategies based on the threat or use of force, rather than cooption and penetration of civil society, thereby further increasing the gap between the state and civil society. Moreover, economic underdevelopment and social fragmentation have often led to an over-reliance by state authorities on external actors to recognise the state's legitimacy and to assist in retaining and expending state power.

It seems reasonable to say that when domestic challenges to the state's legitimacy assume a threatening shape, internal confrontation can either result in a conflict to capture state power within the confines of the internationally and internally recognised state boundaries, or the struggle between state and society can lead to the fragmentation of the state and the creation of a new or several new states. This has also been the case in the DRC. Samina (2001: 2) asserts that the outcomes of such contestation of the state's authority and legitimacy depend on a number of variables. These include the ability of the state to exercise centralised control and maintain at least a modicum of legitimacy vis-à-vis civil society, while simultaneously retaining its autonomy and sovereignty as a recognised actor in the global state system. Samina stresses that the capacity of sub-state actors to pose a credible challenge, militarily and politically, to the state apparatus or to present a viable political alternative to the existing state structure will decide the outcome of the struggle. Of equal importance is the state's ability to gain sufficient external

support, since this will ultimately determine whether it succeeds in strengthening its authority, becomes even weaker and more isolated from civil society, or disintegrate.

Although the DRC is recognised as a member of the international community of the states, it has been noted that it is difficult to define the Congolese state in terms of the general definition of a state, i.e. a territorially bounded polity, comprising different classes and ethnic or cultural groups, with a centralised government and a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. The DRC grapples with the permeability of territorial frontiers, a weak central government that is limited in its aims and vision and a vastly heterogeneous population. Global recognition of Zaire's sovereignty still left incentives for Zairian rivals to acknowledge a state within its old colonial boundaries. Arguably, some local authorities in Zaire possess capabilities to create separate states by virtue of *de facto* control. Yet the current attraction of existing sovereignty as a political resource gives strongmen in both places strong incentives not to challenge the sovereignty of recognised states, even if the reality on the ground is quite different.

The DRC (and its previous incarnations as the Republic of Congo and the former Zaire) has been marked by continuous crisis ever since its independence in 1960. Decades of internal conflict, with the active involvement of external powers, have led to a perceptible shrinking of the state power and autonomy. The instruments for exercising and administering state power, including the civil bureaucracy, have been rendered increasingly ineffective in enforcing the authority of the state. Nzongola (1986: 30) also believes that the ongoing economic crisis is due to a basic imbalance in the production structure and staggering budget deficits and inflation. He describes the DRC as a predatory state in that it fundamentally serves the purpose of primitive accumulation for those who control it and takes no interest in the genuine process of development of the country or in the fate of the minorities within its population.

The roots of the present crisis in the DRC Congo can in fact be traced to the manner in which the state evolved: the changing nature of the relationship between state and civil

society and the dynamics of social power balances within historical context. It is this legacy that continues to determine the state's capacity to administer and govern its territory, and the legitimacy or otherwise of its institutions in the eyes of its citizenry. One could also point out that past experiences of the state building and the types of strategies adopted to exercise centralised control over state territory have clearly shaped the existing challenges to the state's authority. The internal structure, distribution of power and cleavages within Congolese society, the strength and level of representation of the state institutions and central power, and the nature of the contestation of the state authority and legitimacy at different turning points in Congolese history also provide some guidelines to determine the future outcome of the present challenges facing the state.

Kabongo (1986: 28) maintains that the geo-strategic location and size of the DRC, coupled with its natural diversity and wealth, have historically played a major role in influencing the relationship between the Congolese state and society and in determining the course of DRC politics, as well as in enabling external penetration. It could be argued that its strategic location has, at different periods, variously strengthened or weakened the legitimacy of the DRC.

It goes without saying that, in the past, external factors played a significant role in influencing internal power dynamics in the DRC, including issues of national unity and the aggravation of cleavages between class-based, ethnic and tribal social forces. The links between internal and external imperatives will remain equally valid in the current context, where the role of external powers and the divergent political, strategic and economic interests of competing centres of power within Congolese society will determine the future shape of the Congolese state.

4.3 The causes of the state collapse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

4.3.1 External versus internal factors

As we have seen, the current situation in the DRC can be attributed in great part to both internal and external dynamics. As Kabemba (1997: 5) confirms, most analysts emphasise the external dimension as the main cause of instability in the DRC. However, the current paper argues that external factors should not obscure the importance of internal ones. It attempts to show that the situation in the Congo is not only the product of an external threat; as important as the external dimension is, it does not determine the complex nature of the internal political situation of the DRC. There are a number of complex reasons for the continuing instability in the DRC, including conflicts over basic resources such as water, access to and control over the wealth of minerals and other natural resources and various conflicting political agendas.

Kabemba (1997: 6) believes that the current situation in the DRC is not only the result of the legacy of colonialism, but can also be attributed to various domestic factors, such as an underdeveloped economy, loose social integration, weak policy capacity, the absence of democratic process, and the permeability of the state borders, all of which play equally important roles in creating and sustaining the DRC's problems. One could argue, for example, that the democratic wave of the 1990s isolated and alienated Mobutu Sese Seko. The parallel government - born of the democratic movement - strives for power, yet remains impotent. Interestingly, the memory of the bloody disorders of the previous three decades acted as a restraint to anarchy; notwithstanding, the state, as national authority, collapsed. This study argues strongly that it is the fragile and weak state of the DRC that offered the opportunity for external intervention. Sadly, the DRC is a classic example of a failed state: it is neither democratic nor a functioning republic.

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According to Reno, the global recognition of the sovereignty of the Zairian State was central to Mobutu's political strategy, especially as this allowed him to attract diplomatic support and foreign aid (<http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/3/4.htm>). As noted by Jackson (1984:141) global recognition of sovereignty bestowed such prerogatives on rulers of weak African states. Beyond the Cold War era, unquestioned formal sovereignty served the useful purpose of simplifying deals with some foreign firms and creditors. Another key component of Mobutu's politics. Such a view is consistent with analyses, which concluded that the exercise of political power in Zaire owes more to informal political networks based upon economic control, rather than formal notions of proper state behaviour. As stressed by Jackson, such political practices clashed with economic efficiency. Yet from at least 1990, Mobutu discovered that the contradiction between the exercise and consolidation of political power, on the one hand, and economic inefficiency, on the other, rapidly decreased his capacity to reward loyalty among associates. Changes associated with the end of the Cold War aggravated this. He had to find a way to fragment the power of increasingly unruly strongmen and do so while tapping new sources of wealth. This strategy continues to be pursued by Laurent Kabila.

Reno agrees also that Zaire's real political system operates outside conventions of formal state sovereignty. As formal state, bureaucracies collapsed under Zaire's president Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-97), and the country's ruler increasingly exercised authority through control over markets, rather than bureaucracies. Control became less territorial and more centred on domination of an archipelago of resources that could be used to generate income and attract powerful allies. Abjuring "development," administration became incidental to the profitable exploitation of resources for personal gain. Bureaucracies, feared the ruler, acquire their own interests and powers. Rather than providing security to citizens, the regime held on to power through opposite means. Even outsiders' recognition of Zaire's sovereignty has become contingent to what are violent, essentially private commercial arrangements as a means of exercising authority. (<http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/3/4.htm>).

Bayart (1994:47) has termed this invasion of informal political networks into ever-wider spheres of economic activity a “criminalisation of the state”. An alliance of the state officials and nominally private commercial networks has manipulated state prerogatives in global society to combine the alliance’s capacity to create disorder for rivals with private business in way to expand its commercial reach. Rulers and challengers use firms to help them gain access to and control of markets, weak state rulers use foreign partners to mutual advantage.

4.3.2 The legacy of the past

The links between the history of the DRC, the nature of the state-society dynamics and the current crisis of legitimacy faced by the state can be traced to the legacy of colonialism. Kabemba (1999: 6) maintains that it is impossible to explain African disputes, secessionist movements and ethnic rivalries without referring to the continent’s colonial past and the subsequent arbitrary creation of nation states, the legacy of divide and rule, and the fragmentation of societies.

It would indeed be difficult to deny that, as with many conflicts in Africa, the current situation in the DRC has much to do with the legacy of colonialism. Following the violent imposition of colonial rule in 1885 by King Leopold II of Belgium (who regarded the Congo as his personal fiefdom and called it the Congo Free State), and throughout Belgian rule, millions were killed and maimed in atrocities similar to what has recently been seen in Sierra Leone. Kabemba (1999: 6) claims that ever since the Berlin Conference of 1885, it has been exceptionally difficult to predict what the future holds for the Congo. It was the Congo that prompted the European delegates to draft a rule governing the “carving up” of Africa, in order to prevent the “scramble for Africa” from leading to wars between colonial powers. The conference ended in a general agreement between European powers to recognise each other’s rights in Africa; this became the

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“Magna Carta” of the colonial powers. In consequence, concludes Kabemba, the Congo’s vast territory became the private property of King Leopold II of Belgium, who ruthlessly plundered it until international outrage and pressure forced the Belgian government to take control of the colony in 1908.

Mahmood Mamdani (1999: 6) explains that so-called “indirect rule” was the mode of control of the Belgians in the Congo. The principle of indirect rule organised colonial power into two distinct authorities, each ruling through a different legal regime, one civic and the other ethnic. The basis of civic power was a central state, which expressed its will through civil law. In contrast, the local state was organised as a native authority, supervising the adherence to customary law. Civil law claimed to speak the universal language of rights, but the regime of rights was applied only to the population of metropolitan origin, described as racially distinct. Mamdani claims that the system of indirect rule was based on the portrayal of indigenous rural peoples as creatures of habit, incapable of a rational exercise of freedom. It followed that they needed to be ruled through a different regime than the one governing the urban population, i.e. a regime that would enforce custom.

Incongruously enough, this did not lead to the creation of a single customary law regime ruling all “natives”. Instead, the colonial power argued that each ethnic group had its own distinctive customs. It therefore created a different set of customary laws for each ethnic group and established a separate Native Authority to enforce each set of laws. The end result was a Janus-faced power. Like civic power, native power too was a colonial creation. The difference was that while civic power was “radicalised”, the Native Authority was “ethicised”.

The bifurcated state system in the Congo underwent some reform after independence. However, this reform was conservative: whereas the civic power was “deracialised”, the Native Authority remained ethnically oriented. Thus, with the

withdrawal of the Belgian Circle Commander at independence, one could say that the ethnic aspect of the Native Authority was even further entrenched. Mamdani (1999: 74) mentions that during the colonial period, the Congolese population had no say in determining state policy. Since the Belgians had permitted only cultural organisations based on a single ethnic identity, post-colonial political parties transcending ethnic groups or affiliations became the mode of identification and political mobilisation.

After 75 years of colonial rule, the Belgians left very suddenly, relinquishing political rights to the people of the Congo in 1960. However, the economic conditions that would allow the country to grow were not in place. Moreover, the abrupt decision by the Belgian government to grant the Congo its independence, and its equally rapid implementation some six months later, on 30 June 1960, found the Congolese unprepared to assume control of the state. Instead, they found it easier to perceive the new world of competitive politics in predominantly ethnic terms. Kabemba (1999: 7) maintains that this situation has remained the dominant feature of Congolese politics during four decades of independence, and will affect any future political dispensation in the DRC.

Dunn (2001:251) agrees that Mobutu's re-employment of colonial portrayals of the supposed "child-like" nature of the Congolese/Zairian character resonated well with Belgian common sense, which familiar with the rhetoric of colonial paternalism. For example, Mobutu restored the Belgian's view that the populace were like children in need of a strong authoritarian hand to guide and develop them. His negative portrayal of Belgian colonialism and neo-imperialism during the Congo's First republic was counter to conservative interpretations of the relationship between Belgium and Zaire. A major issue, however involved Mobutu's attempt to divest Belgium's Union Minière of all its mining concessions in favour of the newly created and government controlled Société Générale de Carrières et des Mines. The struggle between the Mobutu and the Union Minière resulted in a full-scale diplomatic war, with highly negative and hostile representations of him appearing in the Belgian press. Yet, the incident greatly improved Mobutu's national image in Africa and among the more radical Congolese. After this

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initial flare-up, Belgian portrayals of Mobutu became somewhat more favourable as the country's political and, more importantly, economic life stabilised (mostly because they eventual settlement of the Union Miniere nationalisation dispute turned out to be highly profitable for Belgian interest groups)

Reno agrees that Mobutu's November, 1973 nationalisation of large local firms further foreclosed a political strategy based upon collecting revenue from entrepreneurs supported with pro-growth economic policies. Mobutu instead expropriated agricultural and commercial enterprises from mostly foreign owners, converting them to political resources for the president to distribute to loyal associates. Most beneficiaries had no managerial experience. The economically destructive policy drove down the proportion of agricultural exports in Zaire's foreign trade from 28 percent of total earnings when Mobutu took power in 1965 to about 6 percent in 1990.

4.3.3 The elimination of conventional state building

According to Zartman (1999: 2) African post-colonial history began with the famous events associated with the collapse of the colonial state in the Congo. In fact, it is remarkable that the Congo was an exception to the otherwise successful transfer of authority from colonial powers to independent governments throughout the continent.

The collapse of the newly independent Republic of the Congo in 1960 and 1961 was in fact the collapse of the enduring colonial state imposed by the previous rulers, sparked mainly by the refusal of the state institutions (the army, the executive and local governments) and the general population to recognise each other's authority. Kabemba (1999: 7) explains the failed transition to independence of the Congo as due not only to the effects of Belgian colonialism on Congolese society, but also to the lack of clear leadership on the eve of independence that would enable the state to abolish the colonial political organisations which affected the internal politics of the country.

Just a few months after Patrice Lumumba became head of the state, he was overthrown by Mobutu supported by the US and European ally (with the added bonus of cheap and easy access to its wealth of natural resources that would consequently be lost to the Congolese people). In fact, Lumumba still haunts the collective Western political memory. In his research on Lumumba, spanning forty years, Derek Ingram has brought strong evidence to support the idea that Washington ousted Lumumba: "Due to the vast mineral and other resources in the region, the US backed the dictator Mobutu in his overthrow of Lumumba in 1960." The American policy toward Mobutu was rationalised on the grounds of fighting "communism" and Soviet influence in Africa. It now seems clear that the US was more concerned with securing its own interests in the region than helping to foster a stable, secure and prosperous future for the people of the Congo.

Nzongola (1986: 19) argues that, like Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 and Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, Patrice Emery Lumumba was perceived as an "unreliable nationalist" and a "dangerous man" from the standpoint of Western interests in general and the United States in particular. Like Mossadegh and Arbenz, Lumumba became a victim of a CIA-directed assassination, apparently ordered by President Dwight Eisenhower at a meeting of the National Security Council on August 18, 1960. He was killed on January 17, 1961 as a result of decisions made by his Zairian rivals, including Mobutu, but with the help and encouragement of the CIA.

Reno (1998:151) agrees that political struggle focused on resources and trade, as opposed to formal declarations of political authority or state institutions, has created a special role for some mining companies in Zaire. These firms utilise their unusual capacity to do business in this contentious political environment. Their arrival reinforces the decentralisation of Zairian factional politics, since many of these firms become insinuated into local strongmen's political strategies and share in the commercial benefits of Zairian state sovereignty. Here, too, firms find that they can manipulate liberalisation to attract creditor support for their operations. Some even try to convince creditors to

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subsidise their joint ventures with local strongmen! For these outsiders, the cloak of Zaire's sovereignty helps conceal to others the extent to which their deals are integral to the country's personal politics

The specific features of decline after the Cold War's end and Mobutu's response to this crisis highlight the innovative strategies that Mobutu and his rivals used to reshape politics within conventions and formal boundaries of Zaire that global society recognises. Reno (2001:197) agrees that in Africa rulers cannot control associates, much less shape societies and economies within their borders. Some states like the DRC Congo have been so thoroughly privatised as to differ little territories controlled by warlords. Africa's rulers in fact distinguish themselves in terms of meddling in clandestine markets, use of private violence to deal with rivals, and appropriation of the state assets for personal gain, all at the expense of informal institutions. This suggests that local power has shifted away from norms and conventions of the states. Social forms and practices challenge the international expectation that all Africans live within political units that at least resemble states.

4.3.4 "Absolute power corrupts absolutely"

After Mobutu came to power with US backing, the situation in the newly independent state continued its downward spiral. Corruption, the accumulation of massive personal wealth, a plunge in copper prices and mounting international debt led to enormous economic downturns. Geldenhuys (2001: 10-11) asserts that, among the many reasons advanced for state collapse, one of the most iniquitous is corruption among state leaders. Geldenhuys maintains that post-colonial states lacked the necessary preparation to assume the responsibilities of the statehood; consequently, they were (and often remain) characterised by mismanagement, pillage of resources and other abuses by authoritarian regimes that left the majority of the population in African states without a stake in the existing system.

Chazan, et al. (1999:188) state that institutionalised corruption is evident in place where geographical, ethnic and administration forms of client prevail. It permeates every facet of public life; its effects are corrosive to the moral fiber of the society. By far the most pernicious form of corruption has been kleptocracy, a system in which a leader and his entourage have systematically plundered the wealth of the state.

Kabemba (1999: 8) advances four main reasons for the current and previous crises in the DRC. In the first place, the transition from colonial rule was hasty and ill conceived. Secondly, the colonial order entrenched ethnicity as a major vehicle of political mobilisation. The third factor was the destructive influence of the Cold War and lastly there is the nature of one-party state, or authoritarian, politics. Guy Lamb (1997: 8) agrees that at its independence in 1960, the then Republic of the Congo had already experienced a turbulent history, characterised by plunder and exploitation. By 1967, Mobutu's government had assumed control of most of the country and embarked on a programme known as "authenticity" – later renamed "Mobutism" - aimed at nurturing a sense of nationalism among the many disparate ethnic groups. Despite its initial achievements, the dictatorial Mobutu regime proved disastrous for the country during its more than three decades of power. It led to economic ruin; institutions barely functioned and ethnic tensions, fostered by the government, flared up continuously.

However, Reno (1999:147) believes that among the reasons of the state collapse in the Congo DRC/ Zaire, there is the problem of sovereignty and personal rule. He believes that the Congo DRC's real political system operates outside conventions of formal state sovereignty. As formal state bureaucracies collapsed under DRC president Mobutu Sese seko, the country's ruler increasingly exercised authority through control over markets, rather than bureaucracies. Control became less territorial and more centred on domination of an archipelago of resources that could be used to generate income and attract powerful allies. Abjuring "development," administration became incidental to the profitable exploitation of resources for personal gain. Bureaucracies, feared the ruler, acquire their

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own interests and powers. Rather than providing security to citizens, the regime held on to power through opposite means. Even outsiders' recognition of Zaire's sovereignty has become contingent to what are violent, essentially private commercial arrangements as a means of exercising authority.

Kabemba (1999: 8) argues that Mobutu stepped into the shoes of his former colonial masters without reforming the system. He banned the fledgling democratic structures inherited at independence and created a regime in which only his party, the *Movement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR), was legal. Patrick Chabal (2001: 110) agrees that most African leaders simply perpetuated the system of rule of the departed colonial powers in adopting neo-patrimonial systems based on vertical link patronage between the political elite and their clients. Chabal explains that in the exercise of patrimonial power, the formal political structures that are in place essentially move through to the informal sector. Moreover, in a neo-patrimonial system, political accountability depends on the extent to which patrons are able to meet the expectations of their followers according to well-established norms of reciprocity. Although such neo-patrimonial systems worked well in many countries after independence, it was (and is) inherently unstable.

It can be convincingly argued that the weak Zairian society was the result of Mobutu's efforts to dominate and exploit his citizens, in collaboration with his Western allies. Mobutu earned the steadfast support of these powers as he faithfully met his obligations to them with respect to the promotion and protection of Western interests in Zaire and in the region. For example, his externally sponsored interventions in Angola and in Chad. In spite of the frequent criticism of his human rights record by members of the US Congress and human rights groups in Belgium, Mobutu was secure in the knowledge that if push came to shove, Western support for his regime would be forthcoming. Nzongola (1986: 20) maintains that it was a joint rescue effort by the United States, France and Belgium that saved him from disaster in 1978, after the invasion of the Shaba region and the occupation of the strategic mining centre of Kolwezi by the *Front de Libération Nationale du Congo* (FLNC).

Against this background, the current crisis in the DRC can be viewed as the outcome of decades of misrule and plunder by an unscrupulous autocrat and his henchmen. Kabemba (1999: 8) stresses that although the DRC possesses vast natural resources, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The Congolese population protested periodically, but with little effect. Furthermore, when they did protest, it was usually as a result of concrete local or economic grievances rather than a clear wish to change the political system. Thus, paradoxically, Nzongola (1986: 20) notes that most of the opposition groups who challenged the Mobutu regime after 1974 entertained little hope of resolving the political crisis without foreign involvement.

The economist Intelligence Unit (1996:19) points out that state retreat from citizens in Zaire reflected the extent to which Mobutu relied on his extensive personal networks rather than effective institutions for regime survival. The extremely negative effects of Mobutu's rule on most Zairians likely foreclosed a reversal, since official accountability to popular needs would generate organised calls for him to leave office. Most Zairians lived in an economy that had shrunk 40 percent between 1988 and 1995 and suffered inflation that rose to 23,000 percent in 1995.

4.3.5 Private commercial and market manipulation

Reno (2001:1998) agrees that private commercial transactions in the Africa undermined the form and purpose of Africa's weakest state. One can agree that commercial transactions bolster a new internal configuration of power in place of formal state bureaucracies. Reno (2001:198) notes that ruler's participation in commerce in Africa unintentionally favours non-bureaucratic means of exercising local power. Specially, some rulers of weak states recognise that they can manipulate transnational commercial connections and outsider's willingness to recognise them as mediator between local and world economies to accumulate wealth and control associates. External

support for this interaction also plays a key role in bolstering the attractions to foreign firms of weak states and dealing with their rulers.

Reno (1999:25) notes that Mobutu's success as a patrimonial ruler saddled him with an extensive network of clients who exercised power in their own right. Mobutu later managed this vulnerability with new non-bureaucratic strategies of rule through manipulating market opportunities, even where actual sources of accumulation were not under his direct control. For example, in 1976 Mobutu gave the German firm Orbital Transport and Raketen, A.G. virtual sovereignty over a 150,000 square kilometre portion of Shaba in exchange for rents. Kabila later used this same strategy to oppose, then unseat Mobutu. Mobutu left individual military units and commercial syndicates to forage on their own, signalling what appeared to be the dissolution of Zaire. Different factions jealously guarded useful territory and opportunity from rival entrepreneurs. But competition among these groups reduced chances of mutiny or co-ordinated attack on Mobutu.

Individual strongmen appealed to Mobutu for protection against local rivals even as they consolidated virtually autonomous fiefdoms organised around commerce in diamonds, gold, coffee, timber, cobalt and arms. This benefited Mobutu insofar as it forestalled resistance and contained challenges amidst collapsing patron-client networks. Mobutu realised that his best chance for survival lay in using opposition among factions of his patronage network to neutralise the network's threat to him. One can agree also those creditors such as the World Bank attribute bureaucratic collapse in Africa's hardest-pressed weak states to state ownership of enterprise, control of prices, and manipulation of exchange rate and foreign trade to the benefit of entrenched privilege group.

One can assert that the exercise of political power in Zaire owes more to informal political networks based upon economic control, rather than formal notions of proper state behaviour. Yet from at least 1990, Mobutu discovered that the contradiction between the exercise and consolidation of political power, on the one hand, and economic

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inefficiency, on the other, rapidly decreased his capacity to reward loyalty among associates. Changes associated with the end of the Cold War aggravated this. He had to find a way to fragment the power of increasingly unruly strongmen and do so while tapping new sources of wealth.

These resources underwrote Mobutu's patron-client network, giving him control over the distribution of resources to loyal associates. The prevalence of large, politically motivated projects in the 1970s and 1980s underscores the importance of outside finance to sustaining Mobutu's patronage network. The Inga-Shaba project, costing \$1.5 billion in 1983 alone, typified this reliance on external resources. The project included a hydroelectric dam to supply electricity to mining areas in Shaba. Although electricity could have been generated more cheaply closer to mine sites, the project provided construction contracts for foreign firms, a return for US and French support of Mobutu during revolts in Shaba, an area, which supplied about half of Zaire's mineral exports in 1977 and 1978 (web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v1/3/4.html). Shaba's massive and inefficient Tenke-Fungurume copper mine, designed to tie-in to the Inga project, typified Mobutu's increasing reliance on exploiting natural resources with the help of outsiders to accumulate wealth. This strategy continues was also been used by Kabila.

According to the International Crisis Group (1999:22) once in power Kabila signed a decree transferring all the activities of Gecamines, a major state mining company, to two private companies: Ridgepoint Overseas Development Ltd and Central Mining Group Corporation. Kabila is a shareholder in the first and a relative of Mugabe owns shares in the second. A Greek company closely linked to Nujoma is also associated with the consortium. Together these companies have forged an alliance to exploit all the mineral assets of the central sector of Congo. Kinshasa sources say Kabila has created a personal company called HB Holdings, which engaged in different business activities. Taylor et Al. (2001:274) agree that Kabila was assiduously constructing patronage networks to serve as resources through which clients could be rewarded for their support. For instance in September 1998, Kabila decreed that all purchases of gold and diamonds must be in

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Congolese francs and must go through a newly established state purchasing company. This allows him incentive of cash rewards to his supporters.

Reno (1998:21) believes that contemporary rulers who lack capable administrations find markets to be useful for controlling and disciplining rivals and their supporters. Intervening in markets enables rulers to accumulate wealth directly, which is then converted into political resources they can distribute at their discretion. The Wall Street Journal of 12 October 1998 reported that Zimbabwe's political and military elite has turned the war in Congo into business bonanza. Philip Chiyanga, a leading businessman and the head of a Zimbabwean government economic committee is quoted as saying: "We Zimbabweans were the first ones to go to Kabila's assistance, so naturally we are hoping to go into Congo using the fact we are Zimbabweans as our trump card, and be big players." Kabila emerged as head of his *Alliance des Forces Democratique pour la Libération* (AFDL); he had little trouble finding foreign anti-Mobutu allies. Kabila's strategies, however, show remarkable continuity with Mobutu's, with an even greater emphasis on external partners in lieu of a domestic patronage network grafted onto a state administration. Kabila received help from Angolan and Rwandan troops and Ugandan weapons. Salim Saleh, the Ugandan anti-insurgent leader and brother of the president, for example, expanded his business reach to include a gold mine in Kisangani after the AFDL capture of the area. These arrangements also showed the reluctance of neighbouring rulers or internal insurgents to dissolve Zaire, instead resorting to regional networks to achieve their aims.

According to Reno (2000: 174) once he appeared successful, Kabila became an attractive alternative commercial partner to Mobutu. The increasingly competitive nature of the mining business in Africa, with many new firms adapted to doing business in tough places, generated a broader range of potential partners for the rebel war leader. Kabila recognised the centrality of resource exploitation to his war effort, and welcomed foreign firms, provided they paid a "war tax" of 15 percent of projected investment. Kabila appointed his brother (Florent Kambale Kabila) as "Mining Minister" to collect fees. He

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appointed another brother, Gaetan Kakudji, as governor of the mineral-rich Shaba province. Kabila developed some commercial expertise of his own as a rebel leader since the 1960s. Well before his successful campaign in 1996-97, he presided over the Compagnie Mixte d'Import-Export (COMIEX), a venture with private merchants and Kabila's pre-AFDL *Parti de la Revolution Populaire*. This firm tapped into cross-border trade in coffee and gold to Uganda and other neighbours to the east before the rebel war began.

4.3.6 The failure of a democratic transition in the former Zaire

Kabemba (1999: 9) asserts that Zaire could not escape the demands for democratisation that swept the African continent after 1989. In 1991, Mobutu, bowing to popular pressure, accepted the idea of a national conference with the aims of establishing the truth about the past, promoting national reconciliation and reaching consensus on a transition to democracy. Weiss (1995: 160) agrees that the so-called democratisation process in Zaire began in January 1990. Mobutu, facing an increasingly desperate internal social and economic crisis and an international constellation that sharply reduced foreign support, decided to sanction popular consultations in which the general public would be free to submit memoranda detailing its grievances against the regime.

The Sovereign National Conference (SNC), which took place from August 1991 to December 1992, installed Etienne Tshisekedi as the Prime Minister of the transitional government, but failed in its primary mission to arrange a peaceful transition (Kabemba, 1999: 10). Herbert Weiss (1995: 165) believes that the Sovereign National Conference should be commended for its courage in electing Tshisekedi as interim Prime Minister, in spite of the certainty that this would provoke Mobutu's ire. However, the most controversial decision taken by the Conference was the extension of Mobutu's mandate as President, albeit with limited and essentially honorific powers, and the acceptance of a comprehensive political compromise that was brokered to a considerable degree by the United States as part of its "power sharing option".

Weiss (1995: 165) asserts that by opting to retain Mobutu as head of the state, the Conference allowed him to maintain formal control over the state, which meant that the international community was effectively free to deny recognition of the Tshisekedi government. Consequently, the Sovereign National Conference did not equal the successes of other African national conferences, which led to the emergence of democratic governments. Reno (1999:157) notes that Mobutu appeared to bend to domestic and outside pressure to reform in April 1990 when he announced the legalisation of independent opposition parties. The convening of a national conference in Congo across the river from Kinshasa appeared to provide a model for reform. Zaire's conference opened in Kinshasa in August 1991, under the leadership of Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, known for his neutrality and apparent lack of political ambition. Television and radio carried live debates that culminated in the formation of a Haut conseil de la Republique (HCR), which was expected to negotiate a hand over of power from Mobutu to Tshisekedi, the conference's choice for interim leader. Student's protests in 1990, along with foreign condemnation of Mobutu's repression of them, generated even higher popular expectations of change

After the Conference, Tshisekedi saw his mandate torn up by the head of the state. Many months of virtually complete paralysis of government ensued, with two persons claiming to be Prime Minister - Tshisekedi and one or another Mobutu appointee. Mobutu remained in power and thus prevented Tshisekedi from establishing an independent authority to move against him, despite Tshisekedi's more populist character and his location in the capital. Meanwhile, Mobutu used what resources remained to him to buy off critics, pay off supporters and defectors from the *Union sacrée*, and entice some notable men to serve as ministers. The situation was aggravated shortly after by a general crisis in the Great Lakes region caused by the genocide in Rwanda.

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Reno (1999:157) agrees that like sovereignty, formal political opposition needs to be understood in the broader context of disintegrating patron-client politics and extreme de-bureaucratisation. Multiparty politics did not merely signal the surfacing of factions. Instead, factions marked the end of the more centralised patronage network, Schatzberg's (cited by Reno, 1999:157) "State as Bandit", in which rivals position for the scramble to parcel out resources. De-bureaucratised patrimonialism instilled an individualistic, acquisitive "capitalist lifestyle" of a Zairian sort. For example, a booklet from Mobutu's era entitled *Devenez Riche Rapidement* (Get Rich Quickly) advised with apparent official sanction "liberating the mind of all doubts as to the legitimacy of material wealth.... A man is more of a man when he has more wealth." This became politically explosive in the Zairian context, since "officially" a ruler and the freedom to make their own arrangements with outsiders easily convert sanctioned private accumulation among strongmen to autonomy.

By June 1994, the HCR compromised with Mobutu's old parliament, merging under Kengo wa Dondo, and a former Mobutu ally. A technocrat, Kengo attracted backing from creditors and some foreign officials. Reno (1997) agrees that this consolidation of Mobutu's position came just in time for Mobutu to exploit opportunities to further buttress his powers arising out of the Rwanda crisis in 1994 and the sudden expansion of new foreign mining firms into Africa. This new alliance made Mobutu's presence much more palatable to his former associates who now opposed him, since Kengo appeared much less hostile to Mobutu than had Tshisekedi and thus less likely to hold their former ties with Mobutu (and their ill-gotten wealth) against them.

Dividing internal opposition did not restore the old sources of wealth that Mobutu enjoyed in the 1970s and 1980s. For this, he would need outsiders to help exploit Zaire's natural resources, or provide payouts. By 1994, outside help was scarce. The French government backed away from the now isolated Tshisekedi early in 1994. The 1992 election of Clinton in the U.S. brought no new initiatives to punish Mobutu, but left him bereft of support in the White House. Meanwhile, Belgian officials still refused to deal

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directly with Mobutu. This external political rejection served to cut off most aid and loans to Mobutu. Perhaps the divide-and-rule strategy would have become less relevant in Zaire as Mobutu's control over resources diminished further, but sudden developments in the region gave him more leeway to gain access to new, cross-border sources of wealth and alliances that preserved bonds between Mobutu associates and rivals alike.

The failure of the democratic transition in the Congo formed part of a violent backlash by authoritarian regimes against democratic movements in a number of African countries, including Rwanda and Burundi. In the case of Rwanda, the late President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, had been in power since 1973. During twenty years of personal rule, he steadfastly refused to allow Tutsi victims of the 1959 pogrom and subsequent violence, who were in exile in neighbouring countries, to return home. Under the leadership of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the Tutsi exiles in Uganda launched a military campaign to overthrow the Habyarimana regime in October 1990. France, Belgium and Mobutu's Zaire came to the dictator's rescue and prevented a RPF victory (Nzongola: 1999: 70).

4. 4 Immediate causes of the state collapse in the DRC

As private control over state resources destroyed the productive capacity of the state agencies, Mobutu's ability to extract resources from the informal sector assumed ever-greater importance. Abjuring "development" in any conventional sense, Mobutu now used state power exclusively as a resource to help associates profit from clandestine trade, avoid taxation and explore new rackets that manipulated state regulatory authority such as passport sales, money laundering, and drug trafficking. These activities generated considerable wealth. Estimates of exports of gold and diamonds from Zaire in 1992, for instance, suggest a trade worth a half billion dollars annually.

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Reno (1998:156) agrees that Mobutu's intensified strategy of building political authority through market control increasingly impinged upon local authorities who used access to illicit trades to help themselves and their neighbours weather the collapse of the state institutions. MacGaffey and Vwakyanakazi (cited by Reno 1998:156) show how community trade networks that developed in the 1970s and 1980s contravened predications of Mobutu's political network. Many of these entrepreneurs still had to deal with local strongmen who used state office and ties to Mobutu for extortion. But MacGaffey and others found that some operated independently of political interference as a "civil society" capable of addressing politicians, which would pose a threat to Mobutu's authority.

4.4.1 Disputes over citizenship and land rights: the Kivu war

According to Breytenbach (1999: 33), the causes of the present conflict in the DRC cannot be understood without taking cognisance of the role of Belgium, the Zairian Citizenship Act of 1981 and the Sovereign National Conference of 1991, where land rights and citizenship were linked, thus creating the climate for the outbreak of the first rebellion in 1993. Kabemba (1999:10) further asserts that the second rebellion of 1998 had its roots in the first one, the product of the failure of the Belgian administration and the Mobutu regime to build a strong Congolese state.

Lemarchand (2000: 334) believes that the land problem and the issue of nationality were two sides of the same coin. He points out that although the land issue was clearly paramount in the minds of the rural masses, for the urban politicians who claimed indigenous roots in the Kivu, the real problem arose from the insistence of the Banyarwanda to be recognised as bona fide citizens of the Congo. Citizenship rights would include the right to participate in the political life of the province and to buy land.

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There can be no doubt that one of the immediate causes of the current conflict in the DRC is the ethnic conflict and genocide which accompanied the violent rebellion in Zaire in late 1996, and the subsequent mass refugee flight to Rwanda. According to Nathan (1997: 2), the causes of such regional conflicts in the Great Lakes, including acute underdevelopment, land shortages and ethnic rivalries, can be traced back to colonial rule. One of the most problematic sources of conflict stems from the imposition of the state borders that did not reflect demographic realities. Consequently, state boundaries separated ethnic communities, for example the Tutsi, who are dispersed over Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and the DRC.

Aldo (2001: 113) maintains that the immediate cause of the present crisis in the DRC is the long-standing ethnic conflict in Rwanda, which resulted in the 1994 genocide. The Rwandan case is a clear example of inadequate analysis, inaction and severe crisis mismanagement. In Aldo's view, the international community, including the United Nations, as well as the countries of the region (especially the DRC) that assumed responsibility for managing the crisis made serious mistakes. There was a persistent refusal to address and remove the political causes of the crisis, while many efforts and substantial financial resources were invested in addressing the humanitarian effects. At the same time, the countries concerned showed a dangerous preference for military solutions to political problems.

Kabemba (1999: 10) quotes Bereket Selassie in stressing "every system provides its own gravediggers"; no one is able to point to a single element as the only cause of the rebellion. Kabemba asserts that each cycle of war crimes in the DRC and its neighbouring states stems from the previous one. Thus, the failure of the major players – both domestic and foreign – to find a new point of departure that closes all avenues for renewed violence constitutes a major problem. Since independence there has never been a consistent strategy for dealing with instability in the Congo. Kabemba concludes that experience has shown that international role players have concentrated on short-term

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political, economic or military objectives, while ignoring the need to rebuild the domestic institutions that are essential to a stable state.

Mthembu (2001: 367) agrees that the Rwandan refugee crisis proved to be the turning point in the DRC crisis. Rwandan Hutu militias and former soldiers, who had fled their own country in 1994 fearing Tutsi retribution, were allowed to mingle freely with civilian refugees and effectively turned the refugee camps into bases for rearmament. He points out that from mid-1996, Rwandan Hutu militias actively began trying to carve out a strategic territory for themselves in eastern Zaire with the support of locally based Hutus and members of the Zairian Armed Forces (FAZ), killing and expelling local Tutsi and other groups. Mthembu explains that the situation was further complicated by historical rivalries in the area, including widespread resentment of Tutsi residents in South Kivu (known locally as Banyamulenge) and a long-running dispute over their entitlement to Zairian nationality. The conflict soon spread further south, and in early October 1994 the Deputy Governor of South Kivu ordered the Banyamulenge to leave the country within a week. According to Breytenbach (1999: 360), the announcement by General Aundu that the local population - Hindu, Nyanga and Tembo - had the right to expel Tutsi from land intensified the locally based conflict, and in turn provoked the mobilisation of a powerful Tutsi backlash.

Lemarchand (2001: 4) emphasises that issue of nationality (who has the right to vote and who doesn't?) lay at the heart of the Kivu war, pitting Banyarwanda (Hutu and Tutsi) against so-called "native" Zairians. More recently, the withdrawal of their citizenship rights was seen by many Tutsi as consistent with the threats voiced by the South Kivu authorities against "foreigners" and the exceptionally brutal "cleansing" operations directed against them by the Interhamwe and local units of the Zairian Armed Forces (FAZ) in early 1996. Lemarchand states that, after the wholesale massacre of Tutsi civilians in Mokoto, in April 1996, thousands of them left the Masisi area to find refuge in Rwanda. The result of all this was to create a set of mutually reinforcing conditions for a tactical alliance between the Banyamulenge and Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA),

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culminating in the attacks on refugee camps in October 1996 and the rise to power of Laurent Kabila.

Aldo (2001: 114) agrees that the failure to find a solution to the Banyamulenge problem was one of the main causes of the war in the former Zaire in 1996 that led to the replacement of President Mobutu by Laurent Désiré Kabila. In August 1998, it was once again one of the major factors that contributed to the outbreak of the present regional crisis, one of the most complex in African history.

4.4.2 Ugandan and Rwandan security concerns

Kabemba (1999: 12) argues that the main reason for the presence of Rwandan Tutsi in the Congo was retribution: they were there to hunt down the Hutu refugees and militias who had fled Rwanda after the 1994 genocide of more than a million Tutsi. A pro-Tutsi government in the Congo would have been in a good position to encourage the extermination of Hutus believed to be hiding in the DRC and neighbouring states. According to Shearer (1999: 90), the main concern of the Rwandan government in the issue was to secure its territory against Hutu insurgents operating from the refugee camps on its borders. These camps housed up to 1.5 million Hutus who had fled Rwanda following the 1994 invasion by the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Army. But the camps were also used for retraining the Hutu ex-Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) whose stated aim was to return to power.

Aldo (2001: 114) affirms that the defeated Rwandan army (FAR) and the Interhamwe militias, who had been the main perpetrators of the 1994 genocide, were allowed to settle, still armed, in refugee camps together with bona fide refugees. Ever since, they have used these highly militarised camps as bases for recruitment and

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training, as well as regular incursions into Rwanda in preparation of a major offensive. Ajello points out that for two years the then Vice-President of Rwanda, Major Paul Kagame, made strong appeals to the international community to separate the armed forces from bona fide refugees in the camps. However, neither the international community nor the UN could, or wanted to, address this problem, which they considered too difficult and risky.

Kabemba (1999: 11) further believes that Rwanda and Uganda supported Kabila in the hope that, once in power, he would help curb the rebellion in the north of Uganda and the sporadic incursions of Hutu militias from the DRC into Rwanda. In fact, the Rwandan government wanted to create a buffer state along its eastern borders. Shearer (1999: 94) points out that Rwanda has been able to count on consistent support from Uganda, which shares similar concerns. Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi are all situated on the axis that runs the length of the eastern border of the DRC.

4.4.3 Economic and political motivations

Kabemba (1999: 11) argues that a third major reason for the second rebellion relates to the underlying contest for political power and the material riches of the country that has been a constant feature of successive crises in the DRC. Weinstein and Imani (2000: 17) also note that resource extraction has been a popular past time of post-independence leaders, many of who followed the lead of their former colonial masters in accumulating vast personal fortunes. He believes that the current war in the Congo is revealing of the economic motivations underlying the participation of the various parties involved in the conflict. Intervening states have sought a direct share in the Congo's revenues from the extraction of minerals and other resources.

The DRC's rich resources provide an easy way to finance the conflict, and the rebels have already been successful in setting up financial administrative bodies in their control areas, especially with regards to trading with Rwanda and Uganda. The report of the

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Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Security Council, 12 April 2001, mentions that Ugandan, Rwandan and Burundian rebels were involved in looting and the smuggling of coltan (tantalum), making use of illegal monopolies and forced labour, taking prisoners and even resorting to murder. The report details how African politicians, multilateral organisations, international banks and financial institution systematically looted wealth from the country. European governments, such as Belgium, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands are also party to the looting, having imported minerals from the DRC. Neighbouring countries identified by the UN report as the main plunderers are Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, but countries with seaports are also involved. It accused three distinct criminal groups, respectively linked to the armies of Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe (the last-named linked to the DRC government), of benefiting from overlapping micro-conflicts. ([Www.un.org/news/dh/latest/drcongo.html](http://www.un.org/news/dh/latest/drcongo.html))

The UN report also analyses the export trends of Congo's neighbours, and links them to their involvement in the exploitation of the Congo's natural resources. In 2000, Uganda received US\$1,263,385 from exporting diamonds, despite having no diamond production of its own. In 2000, local gold production was 0.0044 tons, compared to recorded exports of 10.83 tons. Equally, there was no production of coltan (short for columbite-tantalite, an ore rich in the element tantalum, which, in processed form, is vital to the manufacture of advanced mobile phones, jet engines, air bags, fibre optics and computer chip capacitors) in Uganda in 1999, yet the country exported 69.5 tons of the metal during this year. The report finds similar evidence in the analysis of export trends in Rwanda and Burundi: despite having “no production of diamonds, cobalt, zinc, manganese and uranium, in 2000 Rwanda exported diamonds to the value of US\$1,788,036.”

The UN also shows discrepancies in the defence budgets of the DRC's neighbours: Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe have all overspent their military budgets. The report alleges that the financial means needed to cover this overspending comes from the

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exploitation of DRC 's natural resources. Rwanda, for instance, has been trading in coltan: with estimated exports of at least a 100 tons of coltan per month at a retail value of about US\$200/kg, the report claims that the Rwandan military could have earned US\$20 million per month from this source alone. Another way, in which neighbouring countries take advantage of the conflict in the Congo, is through the "re-exportation economy." The UN report cites the case of Uganda, which has improved its balance of payments by re-exporting natural resources from the Congo. The report affirms that the profit from re-exportation has improved Uganda's economic image, so that this country is now able to attract aid from bilateral and multilateral donors.

The UN report concludes, "The conflict has become a 'win-win' situation for all belligerents. Adversaries and enemies are at times partners in business, prisoners of Hutu origin are mine workers of the RPA, and enemies get weapons from the same dealers and use the same intermediaries. Business has superseded security concerns. The only loser in this business venture is the Congolese people. (www.un.org/news/dh/latest/drcongo.)

Reyntjens (2001: 317) maintains that the Zimbabwean military and business sector are engaged in similar activities, albeit probably on a more individual basis. Taylor and Williams (2001: 275) claim that Kabila tolerated the exploitation of the conflict for personal gain by a number of Zimbabwe's ruling elite. Zimbabwean generals, politicians and the ruling Zanu-PF party have invested an estimated US\$47 million in timber, mining and retail deals. By way of his trucking company, subcontracted through a subsidiary, the commander of the Zimbabwean Defence Force, General Vitalis Zvinavache, was a major private beneficiary in the transportation of US\$50 million worth of supplies to Kabila's troops and the Zimbabwean army in the Congo. Similarly, Zvinavache's brother was awarded a lucrative deal to export products to Kinshasa. The "key strategist" for the Zimbabwean branch of the network was said to be Speaker of Parliament and former National Security minister Emmerson Mnangagwa, with his key ally being ZDF General Vitalis Zvinavashe. Among the businessmen in the elite network, the report cites a Belgian national, George Forrest; Zimbabwean arms merchant John Bredenkamp and Mr.

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Al-Shanfari; a "convicted South African criminal with an Israel passport", Nico Shefer (is accused of arranging for Zimbabwean soldiers to be trained in diamond valuation); and three Lebanese "clans" Ahmad, Nassour, and Khanafer who are running a diamond trading joint venture with the Zimbabwean army. Billy Rautenbach, another Zimbabwean citizen and a fugitive from South Africa after his empire there collapsed following a series of police raids, stands in line for copper, cobalt and uranium deposits after losing his position as chief executive of Gécamines, the DRC state mining company, in March 2000. (Miningweb, October 22, 2002)

Chief figures in this "elite network" from the DRC government were said to include Minister of National Security Mwenze Kongolo; Director of the National Intelligence Agency Didier Kazadi Nyembwe; minister of presidency and portfolio Augustin Katumba Mwanke; the president of the state diamond company, Societe miniere de Bakwanga (MIBA), Jean-Charles Okoto; planning minister and former deputy defence minister General Denis Kalume Numbi; the director general of Sengamines, Yumba Monga; and former minister of the presidency Pierre Victor Mpoyo. The UN report says three circles of influence involving Zimbabwe, Uganda and private individuals trying to get their hands on diamonds, cobalt, copper, and germanium are orchestrating the stripping of the DRC. The UN Panel believes more than \$ 5 billion of assets have been transferred from the State mining sector to private companies in the past three years without any public treasury benefit.

Economic imperatives behind the cycle of crises in the DRC are nothing new. Shearer (1999: 97) notes that, historically, the DRC's security issues have never been far removed from the question of control over oil, diamonds, hard woods and metal. In 1997, for example, international companies regarded the advance of Kabila's ADFL as a lucrative business opportunity and a chance to reshuffle long-standing corporate holdings that were secured under Mobutu. Reyntjens (2001: 311) maintains that economics is playing an ever-increasing role in the war in the DRC. The aim of outside military actors is not so much to establish territorial rule or to control populations, but rather to obtain or

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maintain access to resources in enclaves devoid of the state control. Based on this objective, Rwanda considers the Congolese Kivu region as a “natural” zone of expansion. The ruling Rwanda elite, who live well above the means their country can afford, has translated the promise of wealth into official policy: “the Congo desk” of the Rwanda External Security Organisation (ESO) includes a “Production section” dedicated to the exploitation and trade of Congolese resources.

4.4.4 Rebellion and regional intervention

Nzongola (1999:73) agrees that the current war in the DRC is a function of two principal factors. The first concerns the national security interest of Rwanda and Ugandan with respect to the Northeast of the Congo, which led the two countries to support the war of liberation against the Mobutu regime in 1996-1997. The second is Laurent Kabila’s failure to meet the expectation of the Congolese people that his rule would be radically different from that of the Mobutu dictatorship. I would argue that popular aspirations for freedom and development under authoritarian regimes, as well as the exclusion policies of those regimes, constitute the backdrop to the present conflict in the DRC

Even though Kabila could ill afford to antagonise his Rwandan and Ugandan backers, the relationship between the DRC and Rwanda deteriorated after he took power (Shearer, 1999: 93). Firstly, Kabila neglected Rwandan security concerns. Although Rwanda had supported him against Mobutu, Kabila’s exertions to control the movement of Hutu rebels in the DRC, who continued to launch destabilising attacks against Rwanda, were half-hearted. This was perhaps inevitable: once installed in Kinshasa, Kabila was bound to become more concerned with Congolese – as opposed to Rwandan – interests. However, in an attempt to appease the strong anti-Banyamulege and anti Tutsi sentiment in Kivu, and to reinforce his own position, Kabila ordered most of the Rwandan army soldiers to return to Rwanda, and replace the DRC army’s Banyamulege

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units with those from elsewhere in the country. Mthembu (2002:240) agrees that presidential security advisor, Masasu Nindaga, a founder member the AFDL, was dismissed, and subsequently imprisoned. Clashes between troops loyal to Nindaga and those loyal to Kabila in early December 1997 resulted in at least 20 casualties. A military court to 20 years imprisonment for treason later sentenced Nindaga.

On the 28th of July 1998, Kabila issued a decree expelling Rwandan members of the armed forces from the DRC. The decision triggered the flight to Kinshasa of virtually all-Congolese Tutsi senior officials. It is conceivable that Kabila announced the expulsion of Rwandan and Ugandan forces from the DRC because he was growing wary of their demands and increasingly worried that they might depose him. Rwanda now stood to lose the entire strategic investment it had made in supporting the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL).

In early August 1998, a rebellion, reportedly supported by France and Rwanda, was launched in the east of the DRC by rebel forces operating as the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD – “Congolese Rally for Democracy”), a group which included many of the same AFDL soldiers who had supported Kabila just 15 months previously. Shearer (1999: 95) observes that in reality the RCD is a disparate group, united less by political philosophy than by their disillusionment with Kabila, who, they believe, betrayed the AFDL’s original goals. Lemarchand (2000: 340) maintains that on the surface, the 1998 rebellion had all the earmarks of a replay of the 1996 anti-Mobutu insurrection. In both instances, the initiative came from Kigali, with the enthusiastic support of Kampala; the point of ignition, logically enough, was Goma, with Banyamulege acting as the mainstay of the movement. There were, however, significant differences: except for the Kivu region, where violence had remained fairly constant, the 1996 anti-Mobutu insurrection did not result in major bloodshed among the Congolese. The same cannot be said of the 1998 rebellion, with its unprecedented cost in human lives and both sides responsible for unspeakable atrocities against the civilian population.

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On the 19th of August 1998, at a meeting of Defence Ministers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which the DRC had joined in September 1997, Zimbabwe and Namibia pledged to assist Kabila. Zimbabwean troops arrived in Kinshasa the following day and secured the international airport. Angola also sent troops late in August, who succeeded in recapturing Banana and Kitona, and by the end of August had suppressed rebel activity in the West of the DRC. Mthembu (2001: 369) believes that the RCD increasingly assisted Rwandan and Ugandan troops, and consolidated its control of the eastern DRC, by seizing Kisangani, the country's third largest town.

Kabila's principal external support came from Angola and Zimbabwe, both of whom have sent troops to assist in counter-insurgency operations. According to Misser (2001: 343), both countries have insisted that their assistance is based on the DRC's membership of the SADC, although this is clearly not the only, or even the main reason for their military involvement. Angola is primarily involved as part of its ongoing war against UNITA, but the concentration of its troops around Mbuji-Mayi suggests that it had an interest in the DRC's mineral wealth even before the war broke out, and now appears to be trying to protect its investments. The other nations supporting Kabila at the beginning of the war were Namibia, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Only the first two have sent troops that have played any significant role in the conflict (Namibia's involvement appears to have been in part at the insistence of Zimbabwe and Angola). The other countries seem to have been genuinely alarmed by the precedent that a successful Rwandan and Ugandan backed rebellion against Kabila would have set for the region.

Nzongola (1999: 74) argues that if it is true that countries like Angola, Burundi and Rwanda have legitimate security interests along their borders with the Congo, they cannot place all the blame for continued insecurity on the Congolese government. He questions whether Commander James Kabahere, the Tutsi Chief of Staff of the Congolese army, as well as the other Rwandan commanders, might not be working with

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the Rwandan government to ensure the latter's security. After all, what would prevent Kabahere and the other Rwandan and Ugandan commanders in the Congolese Army (FAC) from doing exactly this?

The question suggests that the security issue, as narrowly defined with respect to rebel infiltration, does not in itself explain the Rwandan and Ugandan presence in the DRC. In fact, the presence of the Rwandan army in Kasenga, at a distance of about one thousand kilometres from Rwanda, suggests that security is not at issue. According to Taylor and Williams (2001: 273), the wars in the Great Lakes region stimulate and intensify conditions of dependence and uncertainty that offer potentially substantial rewards in resources for those who are able to exploit them. They explain foreign intervention in the DRC as being aimed not only at serving their own national security concerns and defeating enemies, but also at securing access to resource-rich areas and establishing privatised accumulation networks that flourish under conditions of war and anarchy. Majaju (1999: 7) points out that the DRC does not invite intervention solely by being incoherent and divided. Its resources, such as gold, coltan and diamonds, are a major attraction for fortune seekers. Therefore, ending the war could be out of line with the special interests of countries like Zimbabwe. Shearer (1999: 90) argues that wars may be a drain on national economies, but in the case of the DRC they are extremely profitable for state rulers, their families and supporters.

Chapter 5:

The collapse and reconstruction of the state in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The post-Cold War arena has been characterized not only by the dissolution of the bipolar, interstate system of world order, but also in some cases by the collapse of the state itself. State collapse is a deeper phenomenon than a mere rebellion, coup or riot. This is the opinion of William Zartman, who maintains that state collapse refers to a situation where structure, authority (legitimate power), law and political order have fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form. Zartman believes that state collapse is not simply a by-product of the rise of ethnic nationalism, but is rather a collapse of all old orders, bringing about a retreat into ethnic nationalism as the only residual, viable identity. In his view, it is plausible that when the state collapses, order and power (but not always legitimacy) pass down to local groups or are up for grabs. (1999: 1).

Mthembu (2001: 367) believes that Mobutu's illness (which necessitated a four-month stay in Europe) combined with the political and military legacy of the 1994 Rwandan refugee crisis, proved to be the turning point in his rule. The removal of Mobutu and the capture of the capital Kinshasa by the forces of the AFDL in May 1997 resulted in the final collapse of the state model created by the Belgians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, five years after the end of the Mobutu era, internal contestation for state power continues in the DRC, demonstrating the failure of the country's political leadership to reconstitute and re-impose a central, legitimate and accepted authority.

5.1 Has the state collapsed in the DRC?

In order to answer this question, one must distinguish between the state as a formal structure, which has in the past attained much of its legitimacy as a result of its relations with other states, and the state as the presumed authoritative manager of

society. Weiss (1999: 157) suggests that, if one judges the internal functioning of the DRC state as it exists today and indeed has existed for quite a few years, one must conclude that it has virtually disappeared. Weiss believes that the state's responsibility to promote the welfare of its citizens has been almost totally neglected. In fact, little remains of the state's role as provider of health care, education, justice and the maintenance of the country's infrastructure.

Lamb (1997: 8) maintains that, in the DRC, the state exists primarily as an instrument for exercising power. It consists of a hierarchy of control, with political leadership, agencies for bureaucratic regulation, tax collectors, army and police. The DRC has a territory, with defined boundaries beyond which it gives way to other states, and a population over which it claims to rule. However, this instrument can be used in different ways, and for different purposes. The state can provide an essential foundation for public benefits – peace, welfare, and the opportunity for individuals to find stability and security; on the other hand, it can provide the opportunity for only selected individuals or groups to pursue their own interests, by oppressing and exploiting others. The DRC clearly falls into the latter category.

Lamb argues that state collapse represents an extreme case of governmental malfunction, in which the structure and authority of government, the legal system and political order break down to such an extent that they cease to exist. The basic functions of the state are no longer performed. As the decision-making centre of government, the state is paralysed and inoperative: laws are not made, order is not preserved and social cohesion is not maintained. Lamb asserts that the DRC state has lost its power to confer a name on its people and a meaning to their identity. As a territory, it no longer assures security imposed by a central, sovereign organisation. As the authoritative political body, it has lost its legitimacy, and so has lost the right to command and conduct public affairs.

Yet, Lamb argues that the DRC state has not collapsed, because it is still internationally recognised. It is, however, failing. Shearer (1999: 92) maintains that when Kabila came to power, he inherited less a clientelist state. As formal state

bureaucracies collapsed under Zaire's president Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-97), the country's ruler increasingly exercised authority through control over markets, rather than bureaucracies

Normal state functions had been replaced by patronage. Mobutu had exercised power through a web of informal political networks, personal control over the economy and brutal repression. In 1992, the World Bank estimated that 64.4% of Zaire's budget was reserved to be spent at Mobutu's personal discretion. Hospital and other health facilities were virtually nonexistent, or run by church or private groups. By 1990, only three, barely usable, railroads remained and only 15% of the roads left by the Belgians were passable. Even communication via the Congo River – the route exploited by nineteenth-century slave traders to penetrate the vast interior – was hampered by a lack of river worthy craft. This decline in infrastructure helped prevent any nation-wide uprising against the Congolese government, but it also meant that the country was virtually ungovernable. Misser (2001: 331) points out that during the years 1968 – 1974, the DRC's real GDP expanded at an average annual rate of 7 %. However, during the period of 1975-1980, the trend sharply reversed with falling prices for copper, coffee and diamonds. Mobutu's 1973 "Zairianisation" programme, under which hundreds of industrial, manufacturing and agricultural concerns were expropriated and put under the control of often inexperienced nationals, decreased GDP growth for 1990-1996 to 6,6 %. Real GDP contracted by only 0,7 % in 1975, and was estimated to rise by 1,3 % in 1996. In 1997, by contrast, a contraction of 4,1 % was recorded.

Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment (www.janes.com) declares that the DRC is a classic failed state; it is neither democratic nor a functioning republic. Political conflict, massive corruption and internal interference have conspired to make the Congo one of the world's poorest, least cohesive and most unstable countries, despite its immense mineral and agricultural resources. State power has diminished because of the lack of popular support for the government. The DRC government is now controlled by an elite group of Laurent Kabila's cronies, who control the state treasury and exploit it for their own gain. According to Shearer (1999: 92), Kabila formed an administration consisting only of members of his own Baluba tribe from southwestern

Katanga, and preferred to surround himself with his friends on his return from the exile.

Within the boundaries of the DRC, little or no governmental power is exerted, and a power vacuum exists. In the east, the rebel alliance has, in effect, established a state within a state. The *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD) occupies the east of the Congo and the *Mouvement National de Libération Congolais* (MNLC) of Jean Pierre Mbemba has emerged in the north. The state has lost control of its security forces, especially the military. The country is currently divided roughly in two by prolonged civil and foreign conflict. Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment (2001: 1) notes that the military conflict in the DRC involves at least three distinct inter-linked rival factions, in the eastern and northern parts of the war zone within the country.

5.2 Why did the state collapse in the DRC?

Geldenhuys (2001:11) advances several possible reasons for the collapse of a post-colonial state: corruption among state leaders, the lack of preparation of post-colonial states to assume the responsibilities of statehood, the imposition of alien political frameworks on these countries, artificially demarcated national borders, inappropriate and poorly executed policies and the inability of the new governments to conclude the task of national integration. For Reno (2001:197) the DRC Congo has been so thoroughly privatised in the manner that rulers cannot control associates, much less shape societies and economies within their borders. The state has been so thoroughly privatised as to differ little from territories controlled by warlords. It seems that the DRC has collapsed because it can no longer perform the functions required for it to be considered as a state. The looting and embezzlement of the country resources and other abuses of authoritarian regime nature have plagued the whole country into the web of bankruptcies, misery and overspread poverty without any clear-cut replacement in sight.

Lemarchand (2001:6) argues “the failure of the state in the DRC account for historical continuities between the horrors of the Leopoldian system and Mobutu’s brutally exploitative dictatorship, or between the sheer oppressiveness of Belgian rule and the excesses of successor state”. What set Mobutu apart from other neo-patrimonial rules was “his unparalleled capacity to institutionalise kleptocracy at every level of the social pyramid, and his unrivaled talent in transforming personal rule into a personality cult, and political clientelism into cronism. Stealing was not so much a perversion of the ethos of public service as it was its *raison d’être* (or *raison de servir*)”. According to Lemarchand, the failure of the DRC state was thus enshrined in the logic of a system, which set its own limitations on the capacity of the state to provide public goods, institutionalise civil service norms, and effective mediate ethno-regional.

Reyntjens (2001: 311) agrees that Mobutu’s Zaire was the epitome of a state in the process of collapse: even minimal state functions were no longer performed; for all practical purposes, the state had ceased to exist. Reno (2001:197) asserts that misrule and politician’s failure to satisfy minimal popular expectations can lead to the collapse of order. African’s rulers in fact distinguish themselves in terms of meddling in clandestine markets, use of private violence to deal with rivals, and appropriation of state assets for personal gain, all at the expense of formal state institution. This situation, which has continued under Kabila, constitutes a major handicap to the development of regional stability and efforts at decriminalisation. As a symbol of identity, the DRC has lost the power to confer a name on its people and a meaning to their social actions. It has also lost its legitimacy, which is therefore available to be claimed by rivals, and so has lost its right to command and conduct public affairs. Zartman (1995: 5) suggests that, as a system of socio-economic organisation, the state in the DRC does not have a functional balance of inputs and outputs: it no longer receives support from, nor exercises control over, its people, and it no longer is the target of demands, because its population knows that it is incapable of meeting them.

Nzongola (1986: 4) states that the full measure of suffering of ordinary citizens in the DRC can be gauged by adding to this already dismal picture the breakdown of socio-economic infrastructure and the repressive character of the state and its various agencies. The desperate decline in the standard of living, as well as the corresponding deterioration of all social and economic services, has made the population highly vulnerable to malnutrition, cholera, AIDS and other epidemics. As if this were not enough, ordinary citizens live in a state of permanent fear as a result of the extortion and brutality to which they are subjected by the security forces, tax collectors and other “state officials”.

5.3 Reconstructing legitimate authority in the DRC

According to Lamb (1997: 9), state reconstruction means reviving those institutional mechanisms that formerly gave consistency to state action, legitimised power and established social trust, and returning the state to the centre of social life. In the case of the DRC, a strong democratic government must be established before further state reconstruction programmes can be launched, in order to provide the necessary support and decision-making capacities for their success. To achieve a democratic government, the state must have the capacity to perform its basic functions. Where this capacity does not exist, it must be created. It seems evident from the foregoing analysis that no reconstruction of the DRC is likely to occur as long as the war continues.

Lamb (1997: 9) maintains that before legitimate authority can be re-established in a failing state, that state must first collapse completely. However, in the case of the DRC, the cost of such reconstruction would be exhaustive in terms of human life and property. Furthermore, the requisite capacity may not exist to reassemble the state structures. In Lamb’s opinion, state reconstruction involves restoring five basic elements: (1) a central political authority, (2) control over national boundaries to prevent penetration by unwelcome external forces, (3) control over national territory

to establish a tolerable level of order and to prevent armed challenges to state authority, (4) the capacity to extract sufficient domestic and international resources for the state to function and reproduce itself and (5) sufficient control over state agents who coordinate and execute policy. According to Mazrui (1995: 28), the most extensive state-rebuilding ventures involve the restitution of collapsed states, entailing the restoration of six essential functions of the state, including sovereign control over territory, sovereign supervision of the nation's resources, effective revenue extraction and the maintenance of law and order.

I would argue that rebuilding state capacity must cover, among other things, physical infrastructure, security, the economy, political structures and civil society. However, before any capacity-building policies will be implemented, the conflict in the DRC must be brought to an end, preferably by negotiated settlement. Lamb (1997: 9) agrees that the reconstruction of a state cannot be achieved during war, and in the opinion of Nzongola (1999: 75), there can be no military solution to the current war in the DRC. Given the evident limitations in war capacity of all parties to the conflict, a long and costly war cannot be sustained. Following the resolution of the conflict, all Congolese citizens need to commit themselves to a process of state reconstruction.

Lamb (1997: 10) maintains that the most critical aspect of state capacity building, and also the most noticeable, is that of physical infrastructure: serviceable roads, railways systems, airports, electricity, sewerage, communications, hospitals and so on. All other aspects of state capacity building depend on infrastructure for effectiveness. In terms of security, the military and police must have access to all regions within the Congo to prevent foreign invasions and local uprisings. A basic infrastructure must be in place, not only to facilitate the equitable distribution and appropriation of resources, but also to attract foreign investment. Moreover, a democratic government cannot function effectively without an adequate infrastructure: simply put, the people of the DRC cannot express their political will if they cannot get to a voting station.

Security also needs to be re-established in the outlying rural areas. Formal agencies are required to strengthen local security and secure national boundaries. The

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DRC must strengthen its capacity to police its borders in a manner that takes into account the legitimate security concerns of its neighbours. The economy of the country must also be revitalised and goods and services effectively allocated.

In the opinion of Lamb, a total collapse of the state in the DRC can be avoided or reversed in one of two ways: through a successful authoritarian regime – the “strongman solution” which contributed to the reconstruction of the state in Chad – or through the development of democratic leadership. The authoritarian solution may appear more promising in the short run, but in the long term it is very likely to lead to a new cycle of collapse. The democratic solution is the more viable one in the long term, but is, unfortunately, more difficult to implement (1997: 10).

Finally, the state can never be reconstructed successfully without a concomitant effort to rebuild civil society. In the case of many failed states in Africa, the former regime destroyed much of the support and structure normally found in civil society, to the point where society could not fill the vacuum created by the collapse of that regime. In the case of the DRC, there is an absence of a civil society capable of providing effective links with the state, the day-to-day tasks of administering the liberated territories having been entrusted to Zone Commissionaires (Lemarchand, 1999: 17). The DRC government has significantly weakened the structures of civil society, with only a few religious organisations (mainly Roman Catholic) able to maintain some semblance of autonomy. Civil society, which includes anything from traditional organisations to NGO’s, and from trading networks to community ventures, need to be strengthened in order for the state to function effectively. Lamb (1997: 11) argues that the state draws much of its support and strength from civil society. However, it is important that civil society remain free from government interference. If, and when, peace returns to the DRC and the region, the international community should assist the Congolese in the colossal task of state reconstruction.

According to Lemarchand (2001:50) there is no magic formula for the reconstruction of a Congo state, only tentative piece measures, designed to limit the costs of anarchy and facilitate the step-by-step implementation of the Lusaka accords.

For all its drawbacks, Lusaka offers the most hopeful solution; yet in order to become reality the accords will need the strongest support from the international community. Such support would have to recognise that a dialogue between the different rebel group and the government is of a crucial importance if it is workable, that nothing constructive can be accomplished unless a modicum of peace is achieved. Members of the Congolese government, political parties, rebel groups and other leaders must meet to try to agree on a transitional government that will oversee elections. The meeting on a Congolese inter-dialogue (for a power-sharing agreement) scheduled before the end of this year in South Africa must discuss the deployment of peacekeeping forces. This can be feasible only with a strongest pressure upon international and non-state actors to induce compliance with the peace-process.

The immediate priority in today's Congo is the reconstruction of a legitimate state system within the limits of its present boundaries; only then can one envisage moving on the next stages, i.e. the reconstruction of a disciplined and efficient military, the neutralisation of the militia forces and the extension of political participation. Only by giving sustained attention to the organisation of a broad, cross-cutting inter-Congolese dialogue, involving rebel groups as well as representatives of civil society, notably churches, can a measures of transitional legitimacy be restored to what is left of state. Key items to be discussed would include a time- table for holding multiparty elections, a transitional power-sharing agreement designed to bring "dissident" elements into government, provisions for the disarmament of militias, the reorganisation of armed forces and citizenship rights for Banyamulenge. None of the above are likely to lead to a broadly consensual agreement from the participants; this is where pressure from the international community could make a difference. (Lemarchand, 2001:52)

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

This assignment examined the reasons for the failure of state in Africa, with special emphasis on the collapse of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The study attempted to answer the question of state collapse in the DRC Congo and analysed the very nature of the relationship among the institutions of the state, those who are supposed to run the state, and the people who are affected by the policies. At present, the DRC is in a state of armed conflict, with armed bands backed by Rwanda and Uganda controlling vast areas of its territory. The rebels' establishment of an order entirely of their own confirms the thesis of the African state as being weak and ineffectual.

The research was divided into six chapters. The first chapter "Introduction" covers the aim of the research. The second chapter defined the concept of the state and examined its legacy in the African context. The third chapter attempted to show that the notion of statehood is inherently alien to Africa and that, ever since the importation of this essentially Western concept to the African continent, the state has been viewed as a replicate or imposed political system. The Euro-centric conception of nation state, as instituted at the end of the colonial era, failed to take hold in Africa. It proved fragile and weak, and thus unequal to the task of general governance and resolving the concrete problems of each particular country. This resulted in a situation of perennial crises, instability and armed conflict, with ethnicity often touted as a major contributory factor behind many conflicts.

The fourth chapter argues that the decay of the state is not a sudden event. Instead, it is a gradual process culminating in total failure. In the case of the DRC, a range of factors contributed to the final collapse: some are specific to the history of the country and its socio-ethnic configurations; others emanate from a complex pattern of interaction dictated by the kin-country syndrome. Chapter five advances several possible reasons for the collapse of the post-colonial state. There are a number of observable symptoms; the corruption among state leaders, the lack of preparation

of post-colonial states to assume the responsibilities of statehood, the imposition of alien political frameworks on these countries, artificially demarcated national borders, inappropriate poorly executed policies and inability of the new governments to conclude the task of national integration. It seems that the DRC has collapsed because it can no longer perform the functions required for it to be considered as a state. Therefore the reconstruction of the state in order to revive the institutional mechanism is the solution to legitimise power and establishing social trust. Rebuilding state capacity means establishing physical infrastructure, security, a functioning economy, political structures and civil society. Before any capacity building policies are implemented, the conflict in the DRC must be brought to an end.

Judging by the DRC's volatile history and present circumstances, one cannot expect any overnight successes in the reconstruction of the state. Rather, one can expect a prolonged uphill battle over a number of years, in which the fragile state will have to grapple with the rudimentary tasks of broadening its authority over its territory against the background of scarce resources and a new administration.

Moreover, the state will also be faced with ridding the country of the five different rebel factions fighting in the region, not only against Kabila and his allies, but also against one another: the ex-FAR (composed mainly of former Rwandan soldiers fighting against the Rwandan government), the Mai-Mai (a local traditional group from the east of the Congo who are also fighting against the Rwandan occupying force in the east), the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (the MLC, led by Jean- Pierre Bemba, backed by Uganda and based in Gbadolite, Mobutu's stronghold in the Northern province) and the Rally for the Congolese Democracy (the RCD, split between the factions led by Ernest dia Wamba based in Kisangani, backed by Uganda, and its new leader Onusumba, based in Goma and backed by Rwanda).

The state in the DRC is in a process of collapse; there is a breakdown of governance and law and order. The collapse is the result of the imposition of poorly adapted Western-style political institutions. It should be said that the poor performance of the state in terms of its being a symbol of identity, the arena of

politics and security guarantor for the population are other broad causes for its collapse, whether this is due to the ineffectiveness of the proper institutions (in Western terms) or of surrogates more suited to African conditions. Furthermore, there is no typical African state especially adapted to African circumstances, or specifically derived from a pre-colonial proto-institution; rather there is a set of functions that need to be performed to ensure the coherence and the effectiveness of the polity.

The situation in the DRC also bears out the hypothesis that the origins of collapse may be found in tyranny. In 32 years of absolute power, Mobutu ruined the country by destroying its economic and social fabric and making it the laughing stock of international markets. Mobutu put an end to the democratic experiment of the first five years of the Congo's existence as an independent state. His dictatorship was backed by military force and retainers internally, and by the United States, France and Belgium externally. When Kabila replaced Mobutu, he too established a personal rule based on nepotism, cronyism and hero worship, characterised by incompetence and a general lack of political direction. He relied primarily on a small circle of associates chosen on the basis of family, ethnicity and patronage, thereby sacrificing the legitimacy of a democratically elected government.

In order for a strong, democratic state to succeed in the DRC, the best efforts of the entire Congolese population and the international community will be required. The process of national reconciliation and a transition from personal rule to the rule of law must be accompanied by putting an end to a system of impunity, introducing transparency in the administration of public finances, creating a truly national army to replace paramilitary and militia forces, and strengthening state institutions to enhance their capacity for national reconstruction and economic development.

The promotion and development of democracy, is at the core of good governance, and must also be emphasised. Democracy is the only long-term means of arbitrating and regulating the many political, social, economic and ethnic tensions that constantly threaten to tear apart societies and destroy states. Even if the antagonists in the war in the DRC come to an agreement to end the war, the most important thing will be to

establish democratic institutions to ensure good governance. Functions such as the honest collection and proper expenditure of fiscal resources, the consolidation of membership in the SADC, the maintenance of a single monetary zone, communications, internal law and order, legal security, territorial administration, the equitable provision of public goods and the preservation of territorial integrity will have to be re-appropriated by the state. This will require the building of political consensus, which can only be achieved through inter-Congolese dialogue and a massive injection of financial aid by the international community.

The United Nations, as well as non-governmental organisations has to seriously address the problem of state collapse in the DRC. The creation of a conceptual and juridical basis for dealing with the situation in the Congo is of capital importance. The UN should address the problem directly, by dealing with failed states as a special category and by establishing institutions to succour them. I strongly agree with Helman and Ratner (1992-93:20) that the international community needs a cost-effective way to respond to growing national instability and human misery in countries like the DRC. Properly conceived, managed and funded, a regime of conservatorship could be the answer.

The UN and the SADC equally have an obligation to support the cease-fire in the DRC Congo. The cease-fire will give the Congolese people themselves an opportunity to engage in a real national dialogue with the hope of coming up with a new political dispensation. The people of the DRC have been politically disenfranchised for decades. Mobutu's autocratic rule did not allow for true participation. Laurent Desire Kabila's government did not also provide enough space for proper political participation. The deficiencies created by a lost generation of political participation cannot be corrected through the barrel of the gun but through dialogue. Therefore the people of the DRC including the government of President Joseph Kabila, the rebels, political parties and the entire civil society have an obligation to support the cease-fire because they are the stakeholders. The long-term stability of the Great Lakes region cannot be sustained without a stable and effective government in the DRC. On the other hand, there can be no stability in the

DRC, particularly in the eastern provinces, as long as the Hutu-Tutsi conflict continues to rage in Rwanda and Burundi, as it is bound to have serious repercussions in the Great Lakes region as whole.

So far the performance of Joseph Kabila is not nearly as negative as had been initially foreseen after the assassination of his father. Lemarchand (2001:54) asserts that Joseph Kabila has shown himself surprisingly receptive to the implementation of peace in the DRC. The impression he has made on his interlocutors during his visit to Europe capitals and Washington has been generally favourable. More importantly he has made every effort to distance himself from the old-guard politicians surrounding his father as well as from his Angolan allies. Once this said, one can hardly overlook the constraints imposed by his father's legacy on his ability to reconstruct the Congolese state.

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